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AND MORE!
TURN TO PAGE 72

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GTA 2

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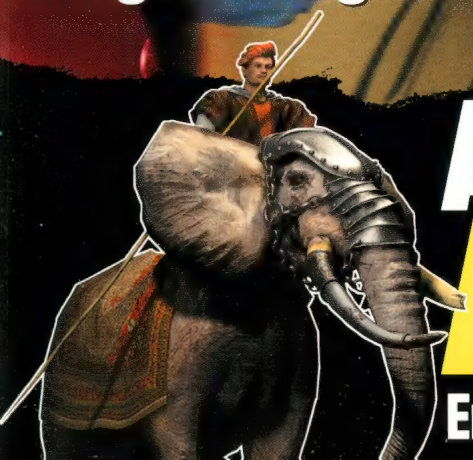
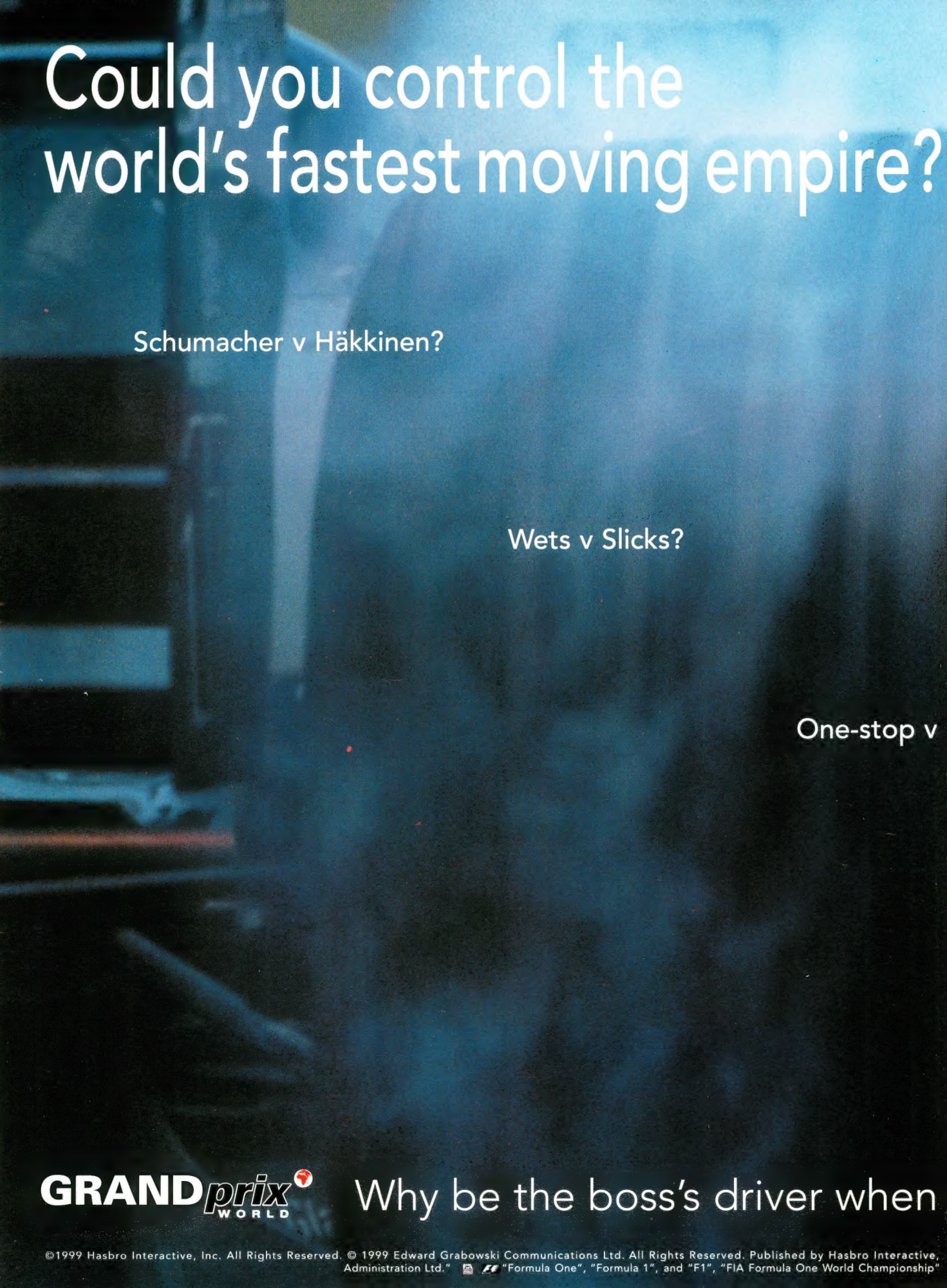


WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

AGE OF EMPIRES II: AGE OF KINGS

Empire strikes back! But can it reclaim its crown?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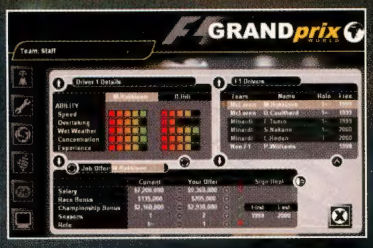

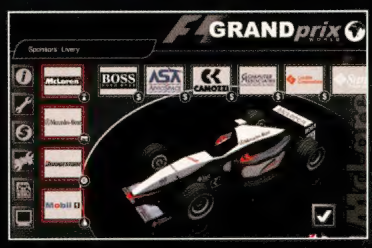

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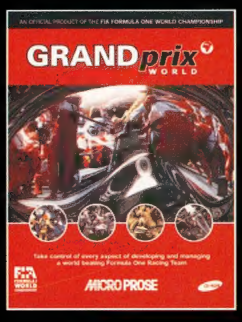

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GAMERS watch it

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PC GAMER

Issue 76 December 1999

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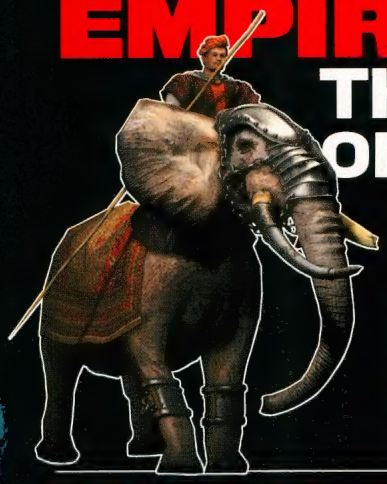
THE AGE OF KINGS



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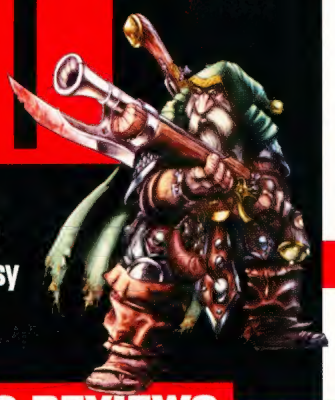

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THIEF

ANIMAL

PRISONER

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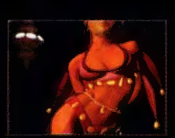

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The UK's biggest & best PC games magazine

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WELCOME TO BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING PC GAMES MAGAZINE

Top month! Five games score over 90%! Two of the year's most-anticipated sequels live up to the weight of expectation on them! A civillian flight sim waltzes off with GAMER's 'Game of the Month' award! There are so many great games out before Christmas, our Latest On section is bloated to twice its normal size! A girl joins the musky environment of the GAMER office (it smells of "urban male," apparently)! Mark Donald visits French Connection and buys new clothes! The millenial madness clearly starts early in the world of PC games.

I was supposed to "look menacing" with this baseball bat. It's a shame because if it had been "look stupid" I think I could have fulfilled the brief one hundred percent.

Baseball bat or no, *GTA 2* is a cracking game. It looks little more advanced than it did two years ago (and it looked pretty retro then), so it's a mark of how much fun DMA have managed to wring out of their collective brains and into the game that we still feel able to award it 90% (see page 88). Likewise with *Age of Empires II* (page 74) – great games are great games no matter how they come dressed for the party. Well, as long as they're not guilty of a complete fashion crime, that is.

I hope you find the *Tiberian Sun* tips book of use. Poor Tim Cant was locked in his room for a month with nothing but copies of the game and Microsoft Word with which to secure his freedom. It's amazing the profundity of the guide you can write when you think you might never see daylight again. Oh, and this month's CDs are pretty good as well. 20 playable demos including *Unreal Tournament, GTA2* and *Rogue Spear* – you're just reading this bit while one of them installs, aren't you?

Just before that progress bar gets all the way to the right then, a word on *Quake III*. We honestly thought we'd have the demo this month but id being id, it didn't happen – in fact it looks as if the game might struggle to make it out before Christmas now. *Quake* fans shouldn't despair, though. In fact, you could do a lot worse than look at next issue's CD... No, I'll say no more for now.

Look, that demo's installed.

Enjoy the issue.

James Ashton
Editor
james.ashton@futurenet.co.uk

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SCOOP!

Your first look at...

B17 FLYING FORTRESS II

It's about a World War Two bomber known as the Flying Fortress, but more affectionately referred to as the Flying Coffin by the comedians down at Bomber Command.

By MARK DONALD

Please extinguish all smoking materials. Including the aircraft, if at all possible.

The plane's model has two skins so that as bits are shot off, the superstructure is revealed beneath. When fire takes hold it'll eat through the plane leaving naked struts for all to see.

B-17 WILL LIFT YOUR GEAR BECAUSE...

- You can fly and manage an entire bomber squadron.
- Pick your targets, plot your route and organise your fighter escort.
- Then you have to sweat it out in the clouds as you watch for bandits.
- It's the ideal opportunity to bomb some of Europe's most beautiful cities.

DEVELOPER	WAYWARD DESIGNS	GENRE	FLIGHT SIM
UK PUBLISHER	MICROPROSE	RELEASE DATE	SPRING 2000

You can escort the bombers in the P51 Mustang, or, for maximum amusement, attack the American dogs via a range of German aircraft.

BOMBERS ARE BIG. Particularly on the celebrity circuit right now. When you've just single-handedly won an air war, everyone wants to be seen with a bomber. In all the clubs, surrounded by chicks; they're the big noise in town. This must annoy the golden oldie bombers of the past. These gentlemen amateurs of the air that used to patrol the skies, dropping their load on roughly the right country, and home in time for tea and medals. But who'd recognise a *B-17* these days? You could pass one in the street and not notice.

Thus Wayward Design have stepped in. Much like the BBC boffins who brought us the astonishing Walking With Dinosaurs, they're restoring the *B-17* to it's former glory through the time machine of our computer screens.

"THERE'S MORE TO COMBAT THAN PRESSING A BUTTON MARKED 'BOMB BAY DOORS'."

Choose your own nose art from the wide selection available. Or download your own 'period' emblems from the usual fan sites.

Anyway, though hours of peering through cloud over Northern Europe may lack the glamour of fighter combat, the trials of bomber command will pack enough psychological drama to fray the nerves of any begrizzled aviator. You don't just fly the thing, – you take charge of strategic operations for an entire squadron, choose which bit of Europe you'd like to bomb and decide what resources you'll need.

You must study field intelligence to work out which route to take to avoid anti-aircraft unpleasantness, then plot your course on a giant tactical map. Choose your crew, nurse them to gain experience benefits, replace losses, allocate parts and man-hours for repairs, and grimly strike through names on the blackboard roster.

In the air, the graphics are magnificent, which is lucky, since you've got to navigate using landmarks like rivers and the French coast. Forests, towns and train tracks are all clearly recognisable, but matters can be complicated by bad weather and the need to make detours and switch targets over enemy territory.

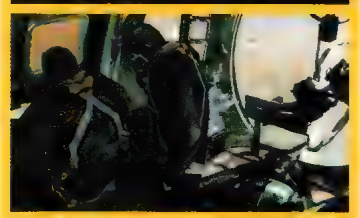
There's also more to combat than pressing a button marked 'bomb bay doors'. When you come under fire from Ack-Ack batteries you'll see the smoke burst outside the cabin and hear shrapnel ping off the fuselage. Crewmen will bleed, fires will start and you've got to patch up both. Looking out the window you'll be able to see the tell-tail vapour trails that signal the approach of bandits. Now you can take the gunner's position and rattle away or jump into one of your fighter escorts and take them on head to head.

Make no mistake: this is a heavyweight flight sim and the planes react accordingly. However, you can fiddle with the settings and, as crew 'turnover' was rather high, they weren't that hard to fly anyway. Luckily. PCG

CREW CUT FOR SIR?

***B-17* is as much about the action going on inside the plane, as it is about the naked violence outside. You can take the role of any of the crew members – gunner, navigator, captain, etc – and personally shoot down enemy fighters, fight fires, patch up wounded fellows and slap hysterical crew-chaps who panic at the first sight of their best mate's brains across the windscreen.**

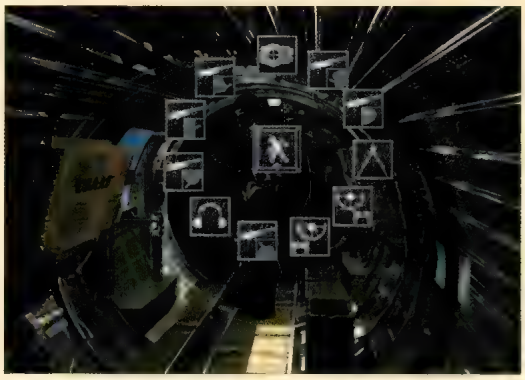
Right-click on an airman and a little orders menu will pop up.



Select the 'peer over the navigator's shoulder' command and watch a little 3D animation as the gunner responds to your whim.

COMING SOON!

We're rather excited by *B-17* and its obsessive need to cram all of WWII into its winged interior. Updates will follow in the new year.



DEVELOPER FILE

Name: Wayward Design

Country of Origin: UK

Established: 1997

Background: The Wayward team are flight simulators extraordinare. They authored the much loved 1992 classic *B-17 Flying Fortress* and have been working on *B-17: Flying Fortress II* for almost three years, first at Psygnosis and now with MicroProse.

Previous Games: Just *B-17 Flying Fortress* back in 1992.

SCOOP!

Your first look at...

HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS: FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Hidden And Dangerous becomes Bigger And Better.

By MATTHEW PIERCE

Greece, Poland and France provide the backdrops for this alliterative pack's new missions.

HAD: FFF WILL BE VICTORIOUS BECAUSE...

- It offers three new campaigns packed with *HAD* goodness.
- The nine missions include hostage rescue and even a tank-driving section.
- The weapons have all been redesigned, and include a pair of new firearms too.
- You can say 'auf wiedersehen' to 30ft commandos, mass drownings etc.

DEVELOPER	ILLUSION SOFTWORKS	GENRE	ACTION STRATEGY
UK PUBLISHER	TAKE TWO	RELEASE DATE	NOVEMBER

If it wasn't for our camouflage outfits, we'd probably be spotted driving this enormous truck.

"IT'S BETTER THAN SEX!" claims Kieron. And, while the poor youth has had little in the way of experience (save a couple of dance floor gropes with teenagers of questionable age *and* gender), we're inclined to believe him when he eulogises on *Hidden And Dangerous*' greatness (as well as continuing the bromide/tea combination). Why? Well, we've all dipped our toes into the water of *HAD's* greatness – even the Art team, who normally can't be prised away from their beloved Macs – and no news has been received with such unbridled rejoicing, as that of this official mission pack.

Since the original game shipped, the Czech Republic's only PC game developers have continued working hard. As well as creating patches to combat the hilarious bugs in *HAD*, fantasy racer Flying Heroes is looking slick, *HAD 2* is mooted for an April release, *and* they've even managed to knock out this little beauty – another three campaigns for the original (and surely the best) soldier sim.

It's not just new missions though. Oh no. This mission pack's remit is to improve in all areas of the original game – meaning that nothing's escaped Illusion's self-critical gaze. From the weapons, graphics and vehicles to the locations, sound effects and voices; this add-on looks like offering more than you'd expect from a common-or-garden cash-in.

"CAMPAIGNS ARE SET IN NEW COUNTRIES AND ENVIRONMENTS, OFFERING FRESH CHALLENGES."

For a start, the campaigns are set in new countries, which by their very environments offer fresh challenges. The first – 'Mystical Wings' – is based in the north of Poland and East Prussia during the Autumn of 1944. A Nazi prototype jet-powered bomber must be stolen – but to do it requires the skills (and constant safety) of an allied test pilot. In the best war film traditions, yourself and the pilot will be equipped with German uniforms and papers with which to infiltrate Nazi security, steal a car, and ultimately hijack the plane. Meanwhile, another pair of soldiers, wearing standard military kit have to avoid detection and provide support by negotiating a complex underground sewer system...

In the second mission, the twists of the story-line demand that you take part in a hectic defence mission, desperately trying to repel hordes of advancing German troops until Allied reinforcements arrive to bail you out of your predicament.

The campaigns that follow – based in Ardennes and Greece – are similarly innovative, and provide a fine balance between infiltration, defence, and all-out attack. For sheer atmosphere, it looks like few will come close to the SAS-dominated final campaign in which rescuing hostages, securing a cliff-top fortress, and destroying a Hydroplane are all requisite for success.

Two new weapons will need to be mastered too (the Russian Spagin and US Thompson submachine-guns), and your original arsenal has also been aesthetically overhauled. The final important component of HAD's missions – that of vehicles – hasn't been overlooked either. You'll discover a new jeep available for use, as well as (thanks to popular demand) a German tank.

We're confident Illusion Softworks haven't skimped on *anything* – and you can count on the fact that these campaign missions are going to be as challenging as any you battled through in the original. The best game of this year suddenly got a whole lot better.

STUG OF WAR

Tanks may have popped up in the original game, but it's this mission pack that allows you to actually drive them. Previously only used for target practice – and naturally impervious to anything but rockets and explosives – taking control of your own personal go-anywhere, shoot-anything StuG III Ausf. G tank should lend you a sense of invulnerability normally absent from such a rock game. That aside, it looks incredible, with the kind of texture-mapping that could un-stiffen the upper lip of any retired colonel.

DEVELOPER FILE

Name: Illusion Softworks

Country of Origin: Czech Republic

Established: August 1997

Team Size: 30

Background: Their debut game (*HAD*, natch) is quite frankly the finest PC game to appear since *Half-Life*. Let's hope that their next offerings – *Flying Heroes* and *Gangster* – can both live up to its flawless pedigree.

Previous Games: *Hidden And Dangerous* (PCG 70, 93%)

COMING SOON!

Next month, don't miss the full exclusive review of *Fight For Freedom*... Get it here.

SCOOP!

Your first look at...

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

Call the police! A games developer misses a chance to make a bad RPG pun!

By KIERON GILLEN

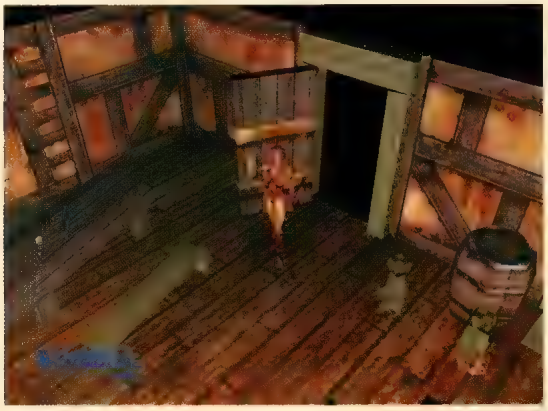
Full lighting effects enhance the atmosphere.

He's ginger. He's wearing green and red. Blind nutter.

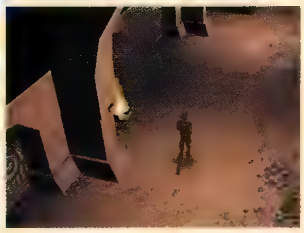
YOU'LL BE PLAYING *NEVERWINTER* FAR INTO THE NIGHTS BECAUSE...

- It's a whole new take on the on-line RPG genre...
- ...which doesn't cost you any extra money after you've bought it.
- You can play the missions single-player off-line to practice.
- It's based on AD&D, so plenty of hot sword-on-kobold action is guaranteed.

DEVELOPER	BIOWARE	GENRE	RPG
UK PUBLISHER	INTERPLAY/VIRGIN	RELEASE DATE	SUMMER 2000



The wide-view will be more useful in the wide open outdoors.



WHAT DO WE WANT FROM OUR RPGS? It's a question that's becoming increasingly relevant as the genre begins to truly blossom. Visionary excesses? Panorama-stretching worlds? Even more kobolds? If you'd asked the question to previous generations of elf-huggers then they'd probably have answered "A fully immersive fantasy world in which I can live an alternative life," or "A realm where I can play with thousands of people," or "A few more kobolds."

Except now we *have* these worlds. Every month our Eyewitness section tells another tale of how *Ultima Online* is becoming increasingly indivisible from the real world, or we have quotes from Lord British himself describing players whose existence is 8 hours work/8 hours *Ultima*/8 hours sleep. But side-stepping the obsessional issues, another problem has become clear: the fact that you're no longer in a story.

VERSION 3.0

If *Neverwinter Nights* needed something else to appeal to the RPG fans – apart from being a conversion of a table-top game to the computer world, that is – then being the first game based around the freshly released third edition AD&D rules should do it. The revisions add a whole new selection of classes, spells and races to the game, all of which are included within. Hurrah.

One of the biggest changes is the reintroduction of the feared Barbarian character class. Originally a magic-phobic ultra-warrior type, they disappeared in the second edition of AD&D. Now they're back. Be very afraid.

Of course, we all know that they never actually wore such ridiculous helmets into battle.

"INTRIGUINGLY, PORTALS CAN LINK DIFFERENT WORLDS, CREATING A GESTALT UNIVERSE."

Because real life doesn't *have* stories. The world doesn't have neat ends, true heroes and sweeping plot. Fantasy-heads may all admire Gandalf and Aragorn in Lord of the Rings, but there can only really be one of each in every world. Real-world simulation requires normality and normality stops heroes. *Neverwinter Nights* offers a solution to this dilemma.

In a similar but more flexible way to the forthcoming *Vampire*, it reintroduces the 'game' to the online RPG without losing the 'role-playing'. Put simply, this is Advanced Dungeons & Dragons converted directly to the Internet age. The game comprises a series of scenarios, equivalent to an evening's play, which can attempted in almost any order by logging onto a server with a party of friends. Your character slowly advances in the usual manner, and can be stored on the Bioware-ran 'Character Vault' to verify its authenticity, left for another day and another adventure.

But that's not the end of it. One player can take the position of Dungeon Master to direct the saga. They can then possess monsters to let them speak, pause time, change events and (most importantly for the future success of the game) create new adventures from scratch using the included Solstice Toolset. These can then be put on a server for the public to play. Most intriguingly, portals can be created to link different worlds, creating a kind of gestalt universe.

Which leaves all the RPG fans at GAMER experiencing a mixture of elation and confusion. While we know much about its elements (200 distinct monsters are included, for example) and its graphics (It runs on the real time Omen engine it shares with *MDK 2*), we haven't a clue exactly how it's all going to work. And that's just got to be the most exciting thing of all, hasn't it? PCG

COMING SOON!

We'll look again at *Neverwinter Nights* when its intriguing concepts come more into focus.

DEVELOPER FILE

Name: Bioware

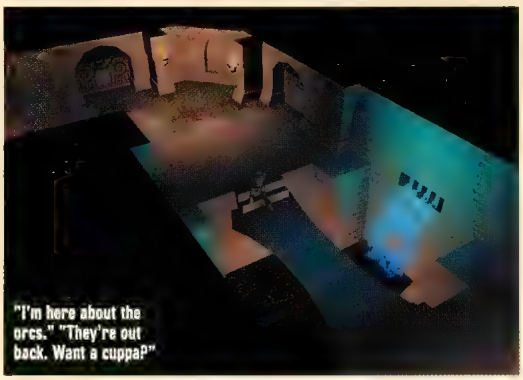
Country of Origin: Canada

Team Size: 50

Established: 1995

Background: Doctors Zeschuk and Muzyka played games all the way through Med school. They grew bored of healing the sick and decided to heal the state of the computer RPG.

Previous Games: *Shattered Steel, Baldur's Gate, Tales Of The Sword Coast,* and also the forthcoming *MDK 2.*



"I'm here about the orcs." "They're out back. Want a cuppa?"

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†

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EYEWITNESS

THE PC GAMING UNIVERSE IN 10 PACKED PAGES...

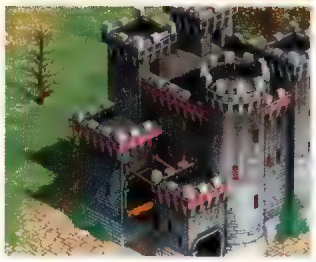
SPECIAL REPORT

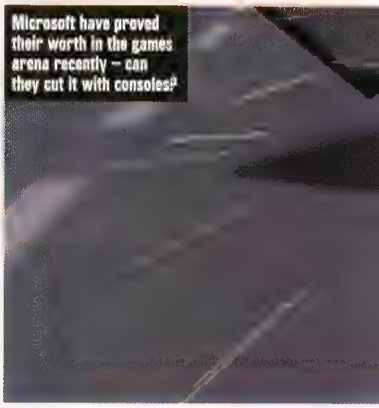
X-BOX IMMINENT?

When is a PC not a PC? When it's a games console by Microsoft.

Speculation about Microsoft's rumoured next-generation games console has reached fever pitch this month, with some sources claiming that the company are mere days away from making an official announcement.

The console, codenamed X-Box, has been the subject of conjecture ever since Microsoft allegedly invited a number of developers along to a secret meeting during last month's European Computer Trade Show at Olympia. A number of those who claim to have attended (yet refuse to be named after signing Non-Disclosure Agreements), say that Microsoft asked what developers would want from a new console, and how they would react to a Pentium III-powered console featuring Windows software, a 3D graphics chip and DVD capability.





Microsoft have proved their worth in the games arena recently – can they cut it with consoles?

"X-box would present Sony with a fearsome rival."

Lending weight to the rumours, the Vice Chairman of a joint venture between Electronic Arts and Square, Yoshihiro Maruyama, has been quoted as saying, "The biggest player cannot ignore this market any more. If [Microsoft] decide to come in, their commitment will be very firm. They could potentially be the biggest competitor to Sony."

Despite the current interest, Microsoft are refusing to talk directly about the console, with the majority of employees answering enquiries with a firm 'No comment'. Should they go ahead with their rumoured plans for X-Box, though, Microsoft would almost certainly become a major player in the worldwide console industry overnight – thanks to the vast back catalogue of existing PC games software, and the company's inextricable links with the Internet making full on-line gaming capability a certainty.

As far as technology is concerned, nVidia are the chipset manufacturers that are being mentioned more than any other, and the ultra-powerful GeForce 256 chipset (see page 25) would have to be a front-runner for inclusion if the X-Box really became reality. A PIII 500MHz processor is also being mooted which, if in combination with the GeForce technology, would present Sony with a fearsome rival to even their much-hyped PlayStation 2.

■ **We'll keep you updated on Microsoft's activity over the coming months.**

GETTING HITCHED

Douglas Adams novel inspires PC game.

After the good but imperceptible point-and-clicker that was *Starship Titanic*, yet another publisher is threatening to bring a Douglas Adams work to the PC. The legendary Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy will finally be brought to life in PC game form as a real-time 3D action/adventure starring all of the book's well-known characters (including Zaphod Beeblebrox, Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect and Marvin).

The talent behind it are Octagon Entertainment, Pan Interactive and The Digital Village, who – despite revealing a miles-away autumn 2001 release date – have already got a related web-site up and running. Check out www.h2g2.com for more information and the pretty ambitious on-line version of the Guide itself.

ROLLCAGE STAGE II

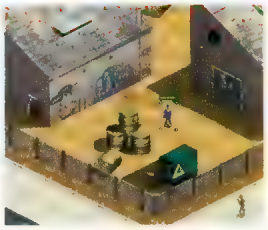
Sequel racing from GT looks set to outperform the original.
PAGE 22

GEFORCE 256

We bring you the news on nVidia's powerful new chip.
PAGE 25

HEIST

Play out all your bank robbery ideas in Interplay's latest.
PAGE 26



SPECIAL REPORT

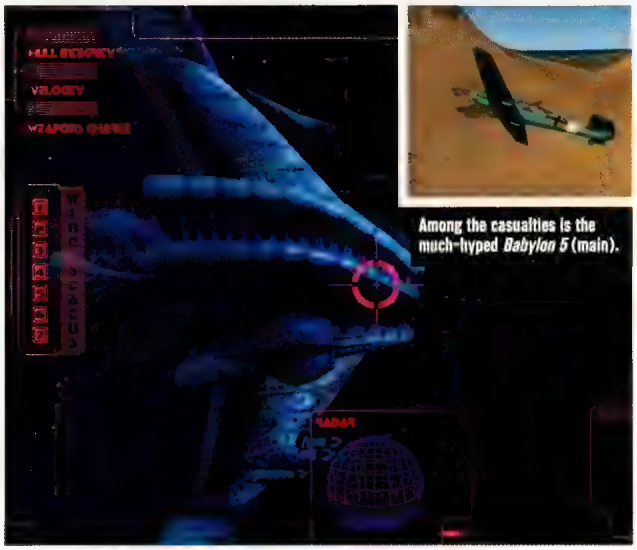
SIERRA'S CLEAN SWEEP

Babylon 5 no longer alive.

Buried within an official announcement that spoke enthusiastically of a business structure reorganisation, Sierra revealed news of some sweeping game cancellations.

Most notable among the cannings is *Babylon 5: Into The Fire* – the space combat sim based on the popular sci-fi TV series, and a title that many were expecting great things from. In addition, Sierra Studio's *Orcs: Revenge Of The Ancients* has been scrapped – a messy strategy/role-playing game that always looked mediocre at best, but still one that had generated interest at this year's E3 trade show. Other casualties include a pair of flight sims from Dynamix: the combat-heavy *Desert Fighters* and the civilian add-on, *Pro Pilot Paradise*. In a press release, Sierra stated that the games did not meet its "success criteria", and revealed that the closures would mean a loss of more than 100 jobs.

Immediately following the announcement, an e-mail petition to save *Babylon 5* was started by the on-line fan site at www.firstones.com. It looks like Sierra won't change their minds, but they say they would entertain offers from any other publishers. We'll keep you posted.



Among the casualties is the much-hyped *Babylon 5* (main).

ROLE-PLAYING

ULTIMA ONLINE 2

More massively multi-player RPGing.

It's been in development for over a year, but *Ultima Online 2* was finally officially announced this month. Details are scarce, although we've discovered that *UO2* will be presented in full 3D – more akin to a third-person *Everquest* than to *UO*'s traditional isometric perspective.

Three fantasy races to choose from as well as plenty of quests and improved monster AI are all pencilled in, but don't expect to be able to import elements of the original into *UO2*; the two will be separate games using different servers. According to Origin, though, there's still around ten years left in the first game, and *UO2* won't be going live for another 12-18 months, so don't give up on your character just yet.

GOBBETS

F***ING SCARY

Best-selling horror writer Stephen King has signed a deal to release his next novella, *F13*, as part of an 'interactive package'. The story – which takes a PC's Function key as its premise (no, really) – will sit alongside

several mini-games, screen savers, a Stephen King trivia quiz, and various other King-themed desktop features. Blue Byte will be handling publishing duties come Christmas.

ALIEN CENTAURI

It narrowly missed inclusion in this issue, but the official expansion pack to Sid Meier's *Alpha Centauri – Alien Crossfire* – is finally finished. The add-on will include seven new races, weapons, and plenty of fresh life forms.

RACING – SIMULATION

FORD RACING

XR3i not included.

Empire continue to blaze a path into the racing genre with this, their promising Norwegian driving game... *(that's fjord, you fool* – Ed).

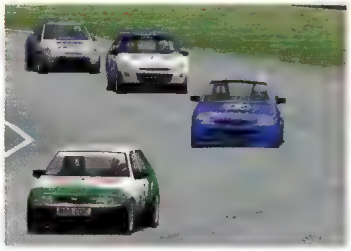
Developed by Elite (the team responsible for last year's above-average *Grand Touring*) *Ford Racing* is, you might not be surprised to discover, actually a circuit racer featuring a handful of Ford's own cars.

The popular Focus, NASCAR race-winning Taurus, Mustang, and nine others are all available to race around ten different real-world tracks. Along with the now-standard comprehensive vehicle setup and Career mode, it promises a startling 80 other drivers, and a success ladder that sees you earning money and securing sponsorship to ultimately finance your own racing team.

■ Empire are driving *Ford Racing* to a January release.

With a licence behind it, how can it fail?

Probably just the next car on James' shopping list.



CRAP SHOOT

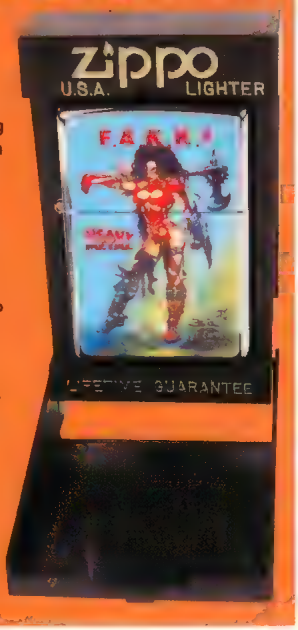
ZIPPO DE DOO DAH

Let Julie Strain light your fire.

Fire, you've probably heard it said, can be a good servant but a cruel master. Never have we witnessed such a cruel master as Julie Strain – the star of Ritual's forthcoming third-person shooter based on the Heavy Metal FAKK 2 graphic novels.

An all-action temptress with a taste for minimalist clothing, it's the smouldering form of Ms Strain which adorns this promotional Zippo lighter. Needless to say, PC GAMER frowns on arsonists, and those who smoke tobacco-based products, so to be in with a fair chance of winning this handsome ornament-cum-fire-starter, simply tell us what you'd do with it if it was yours.

Send your answers to: Crap Shoot, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.



REAL-TIME STRATEGY

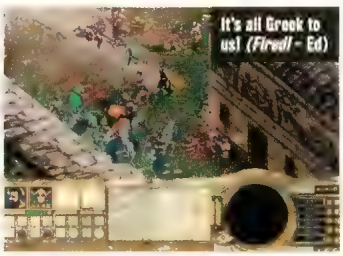
INVICTUS

Interplay's Olympic game.

Apart from Microsoft's fine *Age Of Empires II* (turn to page 74 for the juice on that one), most of today's strategy games are happy using the severely hackneyed, fantasy or futuristic settings as their backdrop.

Not *Invictus*, an RTS set in the days when Homer's Odyssey had just appeared in paperback, and the Olympics were dominated by Greece. You have to recruit a team heroes and take them into battle, *Diablo* style. It's dominated by RPG-style character improvement, and a 3D game engine that allows you to rotate, twist, and turn the world to your heart's content.

■ Invictus will be mounting the shelves this winter, according to publishers Interplay.



It's all Greek to us! *(Fire!!* – Ed)

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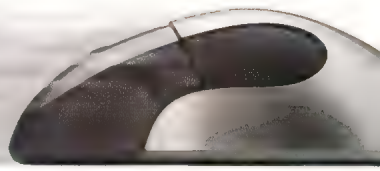
Action.



The ergonomic design makes it comfortable to use for long periods, while the programmable buttons provide fast navigation of the Web, and easy editing of documents.

The mouse has evolved.

www.microsoft.com/uk/hardware/

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ACTION

DRAGON'S BLOOD

The 'tache is back.

We hoped we'd seen the last of *Die By The Sword*, an action adventure that boasted one of the most user-unfriendly control systems ever and a hero who should have featured in The Village People.

It's been given a second chance under the guise of *Dragon's Blood* – a pseudo-sequel that adds another two character classes, as well as their own specific adventures. For those who managed to avoid the original, *Dragon's Blood* looks like being a third-person hack-and-slash-fest through tortuous caverns. Described by Interplay as an 'interactive 3D masterpiece', there's only a few months to wait before we can give you our own side of the story.

■ **Interplay will give us *Dragon's Blood* this Christmas.**

STRATEGY

TZAR

Battle of the Bulg.

Even Bulgaria's most zealous countryman wouldn't argue that, in the field of PC game development, they're world leaders. And while *Tzar* may not change that, it does look like developers Haemimont have cooked up an interesting mix of *Warcraft II* and *Age Of Empires*, with a smattering of role-playing elements for good taste.

There are three distinct civilisations, eight resources, an in-depth trade and diplomacy section, complex conversations, and a tavern where you can gamble all your money away. We'll bring you a full review next month.

■ **Zablac will ship it out in November.**

THE SPY

THE FINAL FRONTIER

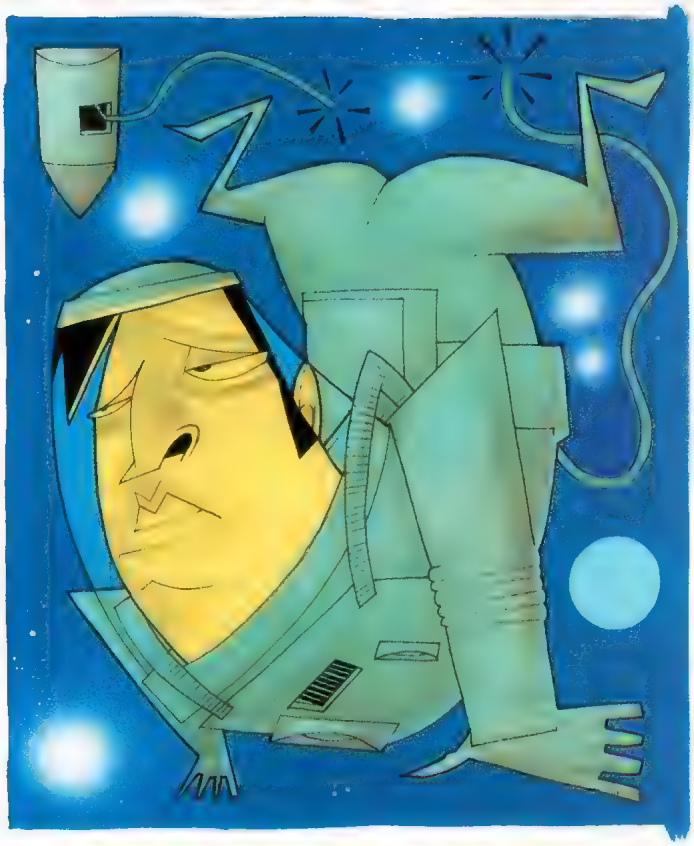


Illustration: David Lyttleton

A good month for the legal profession.

It's tragic when double acts split up. Mrs Spy wept when Simon and Garfunkel went their separate ways, and it almost brought a tear to The Spy's eye this month when news hit of Elite co-creators David Braben and Ian Bell's latest tiff. According to an e-mail allegedly originating from a director of CIX (Bell's web host), CIX closed Bell's sites after Braben threatened legal action.

His alleged complaint concerned Bell's posting of complete emulated versions of *Elite* on the site. It's not at all clear what's fuelling this ill-feeling between the pair, but The Spy invites them both to contact him at PC GAMER so the truth can be told...

Similarly, confusion reigns at Infogrames, where, at the time of going to press, The Spy heard rumours of a mass exodus. Apparently, a whopping 30 members of DID *(Wargasm, Total Air War*, etc.) have upped and left. Surely they can't have joined ex-DID Martin Kenwright at his new development company? More next month.

Happier news concerns the off-the-record announcement of two forthcoming games. No sooner do we review *GTA 2* than we hear rumours of DMA's next project – *GTA 3D*. We're sure work will begin on it once publishers Take Two have signed on the dotted line for the Scottish developers. The price? A mere $11 million in *cash* prised them away from Infogrames. *Outcast 2* is also in the works, and, finally... can it be true? *Daikatana* out before Christmas? Yes, according to Romero himself and the Ion Storm team. We'll see. Spy out.

GOBBETS

HELL ON EARTH?

Electronic Arts continue to shroud many of their Y2K releases in a veil of secrecy, with *Jane's Civilian Flight Simulator*, the RPG-sounding *Hellgate, F1 2000*, and *Superbike Championship 2000* all remaining under wraps for the time being. Their secret web-site for journos claims a pretty specific 17th March release date for *Hellgate*, yet carries no other information. How queer.

HOMM'S AWAY

News reaches us that an official expansion pack for 3DO's *Heroes Of Might And Magic III* has just been completed. The dramatically titled

***Armageddon's Blade* will add another six campaigns, 35 new maps, and ten multi-player-specific scenarios. An advanced version of the game's editor is also included. We'll review it just as soon as we get our hands on a copy.**

COMMAND AND CONFER

You've waited for three years, bought the game and probably finished it by now, so why not get the T-shirt? And the bag. And the pen and the torch and the sunglasses. We've unexpectedly been given a job lot of promotional *Tiberian Sun* goodies, and we want to get rid of them before they take over the office. So, if you fancy winning any of the aforementioned, (the torches are particularly nice), simply tell us what the two warring factions in *C&C* are called. Send to 'Command And Confer', at the usual address, or send an e-mail to pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

GOBBETS

THE MANE EVENT

Peter Molyneux's development studio, Lionhead, has announced that Activision will publish their next two games. The industry legend and brains behind the forthcoming *Black & White* will act as Executive Producer on the titles. Both will use the strategy/god game's engine as their backbone. Two affiliated developers, Big Blue Box and Intrepid, will take direct charge of the projects.

KONUNG THE BARBARIAN

***Konung: Legends Of The North* is the latest offering from our Russian friends. An intriguing blend of RPG and real-time strategy, it sounds a lot like**

***Warcraft III*, until you realise it's defiantly 2D and features around 50,000 words of dialogue from NPCs. No word on a Euro publisher yet, but we'll keep you posted.**

ISLE BE BACK

Tucked away in an inconspicuous corner of a Blue Byte press disc, comes the fourth installment of one of the best-loved strategy series ever. Although its predecessors relied on hexes to illustrate

the landscape, *Battle Isle 4* is fully 3D, and looks very like Pumpkin's *Warzone 2100*. So far, only plot details have been released, with an anticipated autumn 2000 release date. We'll bring you an exclusive full preview in the coming months.

ROLE PLAYING

ICEWIND DALE

Nothing to do with Mr Winton, we trust.

Fans of *Baldur's Gate* are going to lap up this RPG set in Wizards Of The Coast's *Forgotten Realms*. What with *Planescape Torment* and *Neverwinter Nights* too (see page 12), publishers Interplay are doing well knocking out quality RPGs. *Icewind Dale* looks set to expand their dominance even more. From a story-line point of view, it focuses more on dungeon exploration than its precursor's outdoor pursuits, though it yet again revolves around a party of adventurers rather than a single protagonist.

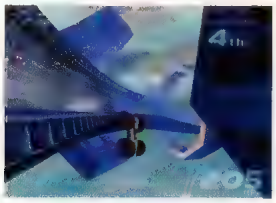
Using *Baldur's Gate's* Bioware Infinity Engine, and employing the same rules (AD&D second edition), the Robert Salvatore-inspired title is looking like a strong rival to Bioware's original. New monsters, spells, and, naturally, environments should make it a winner.

■ Interplay will cast *Icewind Dale* out into the shops sometime during the first half of next year.

Lets hope you and your gang can handle a few creepy-crawlies, eh?

RACING: ARCADE

ROLLCAGE STAGE II



Topsy-turvy tracks to test you.

The original didn't stay on our hard drives for long, but this sequel looks like addressing the problems that hampered the 360° console-flavoured racing of *Rollcage*.

Featuring a seriously impressive 60 tracks and 14 different game modes, *Rollcage Stage II* is split up into leagues (one of which will be hidden). In these leagues you'll be able to race against AI-controlled cars, play multi-player with up to four players in a split-screen mode, and choose from over 60 cars.

Scramble and pursuit tracks, combat arenas, and 12 new weapons should also ensure that *Rollcage Stage II* fares better than its predecessor.

■ GT will be publishing *Rollcage Stage II* in the festive season.

More potentially vomit-inducing upside-down racing. Plus, you can play split-screen.

KA-52 TEAM ALLIGATOR

Hopefully, it won't be a croc.

We've thrown our Bumper Book of Chopper Gags away, so with no chance of a penis double-entendre to open with, we'll just mention *Team Alligator*, Simis' follow up to *Team Apache*.

You fly the Russian 'copter in a selection of missions over two campaigns. The wingman commands let you influence actions of up to 16 choppers in real-time, and order over 60 ground units about.

Customisable missions add to the appeal and, with still no sign of Novalogic's *Comanche 4*, *Team Alligator* could well be the only 'copter sim around this Christmas.

■ GT are planning a snappy November release.

Games
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GOBBETS

STICK ME HORNY

The winner of the 'Stick Me Joy' compo back in PCG 72's gobbets is Aidan Briggs of Buckinghamshire, who has received a Suncom joystick. The very popular 'I Want To Get Horny' compo from PCG 74's Money Pit was won by Tom Williams from Newport, who wins the limited-edition Horned Reaper figure.

BILL OPENS THE FLOODGATES

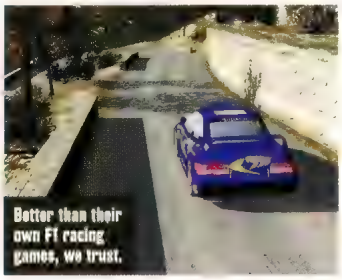
Windows-supremo Bill Gates has seen his fortune cut thanks to charitable donations he's made over the past year. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – currently standing at a cool $17 billion – is the United States' biggest such organisation devoted to worthy causes. Worry not though, for Bill still has a fortune of $71 billion.

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

RALLY RACING SIMULATION

It does exactly what it says on the box.

Although Europress' *Rally Championship* has set a tough standard to beat (see review, page 112), Ubi Soft are happy to rise to the challenge with their unambiguously named *Rally Racing Simulation*. As ever, stats are important, and this game's got them in spades: it features every official rally track of last year including all 18 stages – as well as more than 30 individually modelled cars.



Better than their own F1 racing games, we trust.

Weather effects, a variety of road surfaces and a much-hyped localised damage model that includes 30 separate detachable car parts are all in there. It's not all talk either; we witnessed the game running at last month's ECTS trade show, and, even in the visual stakes, it looked like a worthy rival to both Codemasters' *Colin McRae 2* and Infogrames' gorgeous *Rallymasters*.

■ **Ubi Soft are confidently steering *Rally Racing Simulation* towards a March 2000 release.**

BUG WATCH

Free first aid for your games.

ON THE CD

We've downloaded the latest patches and crammed them onto CD GAMER 1 and 2.

■ ***Championship Manager 2*** – A data update that changes the English league promotions and relegations.

■ ***Dungeon Keeper 2*** – Support for 1024 x 768 resolutions, a number of multi-player maps, and various bug fixes.

■ ***MechWarrior 3*** – Implements a number of bug fixes, along with the ability to utilise forthcoming map add-ons.

■ ***Prince Of Persia 3D*** – Load and save improvements, reduces server better combat and AI. It also adds comes your game at the start of each new level.

■ ***Sports Car GT*** – A number of game improvements.

■ ***System Shock 2*** – Improves co-operative modem and LAN capability for up to four players.

■ ***Star Trek: Starfleet Command*** – Includes bug fixes affecting the setting of supplies, cloaking devices, and hydrans.

■ ***Warzone 2100*** – Increases Cyborg Alloys, and offers new building techniques amongst other things.

NVIDIA GEFORCE

New chip threatens to blow the competition away.

This summer and autumn saw a tidal wave of new, powerful graphics chipsets including the 3dfx Voodoo 3, nVidia TNT2 and Videologic PowerVR2. However, nVidia have just announced a brand new chip which is designed to beat them all.

The GeForce 256 is the world's first 256-bit 3D processor, which features an integrated geometry transform engine, an integrated dynamic lighting engine, and a four-pixel rendering pipeline.

The most important aspect is that it is the first Graphics Processing Unit: the chip has more 3D power than a maximum-configuration Cray supercomputer. Designed with DirectX 7.0 (found on CD Gamer 1 this month) and Pentium III processors in mind, the GeForce seems set to be the millennium's finest graphics chip.

STOP PRESS! A Creative board based on the GeForce chip has just arrived in the office. We'll have a proper group test next month, alongside the Voodoo3 3500 TV, the Aztech TNT2 Ultra and the PowerVR2-based Neon. In the meantime, check www.geforce.com for more info.

WIN! AN MP3 PLAYER!

Cutting edge sound systems up for grabs.

You may remember spotting the sexy curves of the Pine D-Music MP3 Player in these pages before. A combination MP3 player and dictaphone, it's incredibly light, and – thanks to its solid state construction – it never skips a beat unlike portable CD players. Plus you can, of course, directly download MP3s onto it from the Internet. Sound quality is good too, and we can say, without doubt, that it's the best dictaphone we've ever had our hands on: a powerful mic, and hours of recording time thanks to the 32Mb FLASH RAM.

As promised, we've persuaded Pine to give us four of them (worth around £170 *each*). To be in with a chance of winning one, send us the answer to the following question by November 22nd: Flavor Flav is a member of which MP3-friendly rap band? Send your answer to **'Yeah, Boyeeeee!!', PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW.**

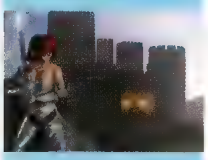
GOBBETS

FANCY A JOB?

Course you do. We're after a couple of writers, see. Two people to play games a lot, write about them even more, and take the occasional trip to sunnier climes in order to file 'special reports'. They're not holidays, honest. Anyway, we're after applicants who naturally know their PC games inside-out, are able to write sparklingly funny, informative copy, and wouldn't mind sitting in a cramped office all day. These are full-time positions, so you'd have to move to Bath – and salary is subject to experience. If you fancy your chances, send your CV along with 150 words explaining why you should get the job to James Ashton, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.

SEVENTH HEAVEN

Erik Yeo, the Lead Designer of C&C: Tiberian Sun who left Westwood before the game's release, has resurfaced at newly-formed 7 Studios. Alongside fellow ex-Westwood employee,



Lewis Patterson, the pair are working on a strategy title called Legion, based on the legends of King Arthur and Camelot. Midway have apparently signed on as publishers but no firm release date has been announced.

AMEN TO AMEN

Cavedog's promising first-person shooter has been rocked by the redundancy of a number of the game's design team. Although many have been let go (apparently while the programmers catch up with the designers' completed work), Cavedog stress that the game's slippage will be minimal, and that they're still on target for a mid-2000 release date. We'll see.

STRATEGY

HEIST

Hands up, baby, hands up.

For a subject matter so rich in atmosphere and characters, organised crime and large-scale theft are pretty poorly represented by PC games. Enter *Heist*, a real-time strategy title that aims to simulate Italian Job-style capers in isometric 3D. From amateur thugs holding up petrol stations to full-scale bank jobs, *Heist* will ultimately give you control of a gang powerful enough to top the FBI's 'Most Wanted' lists. The police are naturally your biggest foes, although you'll also have to cope with have-a-go heroes and hapless getaway drivers along the way.

Visually, it doesn't look impressive, but *Heist's* varied missions could well save it from being another *Streetwars*.

■ **Interplay will stick *Heist* up on the shelves in Spring 2000.**

Such an attractive bank; who could resist robbing it?

SAY WHAT?

The things they say.

■ "I'd just like to make a short announcement about the direction we'll be taking with the musical score on *Half-Life: Opposing Force*. We've dropped the ambient-techno-trance-style music of the original game, and have decided to go with 100% hardcore beat box, featuring the vocal talents of Randy 'Grandmaster Phat' Pitchford."
– Rob Heironimus, Lead Level Designer at Gearbox, explains why *Opposing Force* will be different.

■ "We started thinking seriously about *Warcraft III* as soon as we finished *Starcraft*. We've more or less been working on it seriously since the day that game shipped."
– Mike O'Brien, Lead Developer at Blizzard, fills us in on what they've been doing for the last 12 months.

■ "Some hardware architectures can nicely encapsulate all state changes in a single DMA buffer, but register sharing among different fields sometimes requires the driver to do manual masks, negating much of the async display list benefits."
– John Carmack, Lead Programmer and Owner of Id Software, makes small talk.

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

KISS: PSYCHO CIRCUS

We're looking forward to the French version.

It has to be said that the heavy glam rock of Messrs Simmons and co isn't our cup of tea. That doesn't prevent us getting excited about the game, though, based as it is on the Todd McFarlane graphic novels rather than the band's back catalogue.

Third Law are the team behind it – a group who gained notoriety by leaving Ion Storm's *Daikatana* in the lurch. This LithTech-powered first-person shooter looked great at last month's ECTS, having already been snapped up by GOD. Each of the band members will feature, while the dark, bizarre environments are populated by nightmarish creatures. They'll complement the nightmarish music perfectly if you ask us.

■ **Take Two will blow us *KISS: Psycho Circus* in March of next year.**

Whether Gene Simmons' tongue will be a weapon has yet to be confirmed.

PHARAOH

2,000 years in development

From 2900BC to 700BC the Ancient Kingdom of Egypt grew to become the most powerful civilisation the world had ever known. For 2,000 years a series of living Gods - the Pharaohs - governed this fertile land creating monuments to their greater glory and founding ruling dynasties that established their total control. Pharaoh, from the makers of the highly successful Caesar III, lets you enter a beautifully detailed reconstruction of the Nile Kingdom to shape your own destiny - and that of your people.

AVAILABLE ON PC CD ROM

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CITY BUILDING SERIES
IMPRESSIONS

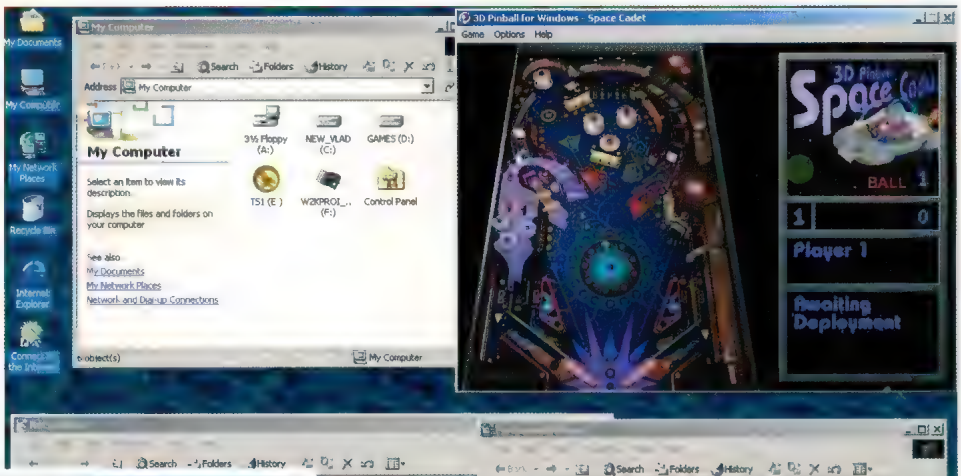
IT'S A WINDOWS PAIN

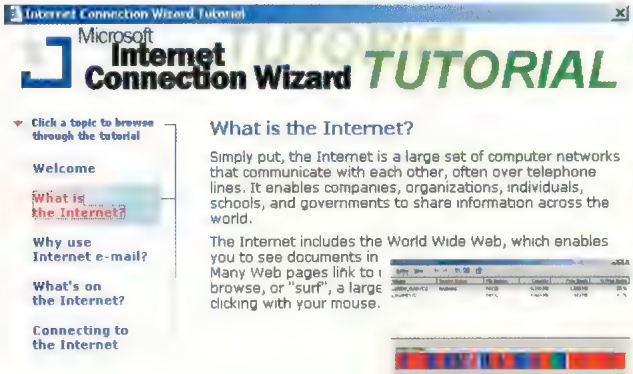
Windows is due to be polished once again, but it's not quite as straightforward as you might (or might not) expect. There's a number of flavours, so don't go throwing money at Microsoft just yet.

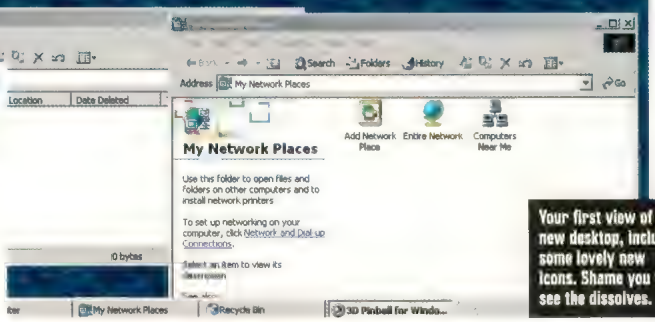
By STEVE OWEN

SPECIAL REPORT

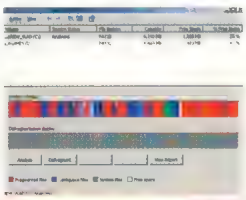
KEENLY anticipating the next edition of Windows is hardly everyone's idea of a spiffing time, but a new version can be interesting. Honest. For instance, the problems of the last one are often ironed out. Although, admittedly, new ones usually turn up. It should become easier to use and upgrade your PC, too; and installing and running games, by rights, should get easier and easier. That's the plan, at any rate.




Internet Connection Wizard Tutorial
Microsoft
Internet Connection Wizard TUTORIAL
Click a topic to browse through the tutorial
Welcome
What is the Internet?
Why use Internet e-mail?
What's on the Internet?
Connecting to the Internet
What is the Internet?
Simply put, the Internet is a large set of computer networks that communicate with each other, often over telephone lines. It enables companies, organizations, individuals, schools, and governments to share information across the world.
The Internet includes the World Wide Web, which enables you to see documents in


My Network Places
Add Network Place
Entire Network
Computers Near Me
Use this folder to open files and folders on other computers and to install network printers.
To set up networking on your computer, click Network and Dial-up Connections.

Your first view of the new desktop, including some lovely new icons. Shame you can't see the dissolves.



WINDOWS BY ANY OTHER NAME

OK, so it's all a bit confusing. Here's a rundown of all the Windows versions.

WINDOWS 1.0 – A hideous hybrid and very limited version (I remember it) that no-one liked, which others in our group played.

WINDOWS 95 – The one that Windows users are familiar with.

WINDOWS 98 – The one that Windows users are familiar with.

WINDOWS 2000 – Not a budget keyboard, but an improvement on the NT4 OS, really for businesses, but with a friendly interface (released January 2000).

MILLENNIUM – Codename for Windows 2000 Consumer Edition. The home version of Windows 2000 (released late 2000).

ASTRA/ASTRAMAT – Codename for Windows version 5.0 (WIN2000, due late 2000).

NEPTUNE – Codename for new Windows Consumer Edition (Millennium, successor to Win2000, released 2001).

WINDOWS 2001 – A PC GAMER guess at when Windows NT and Windows 95 finally meet

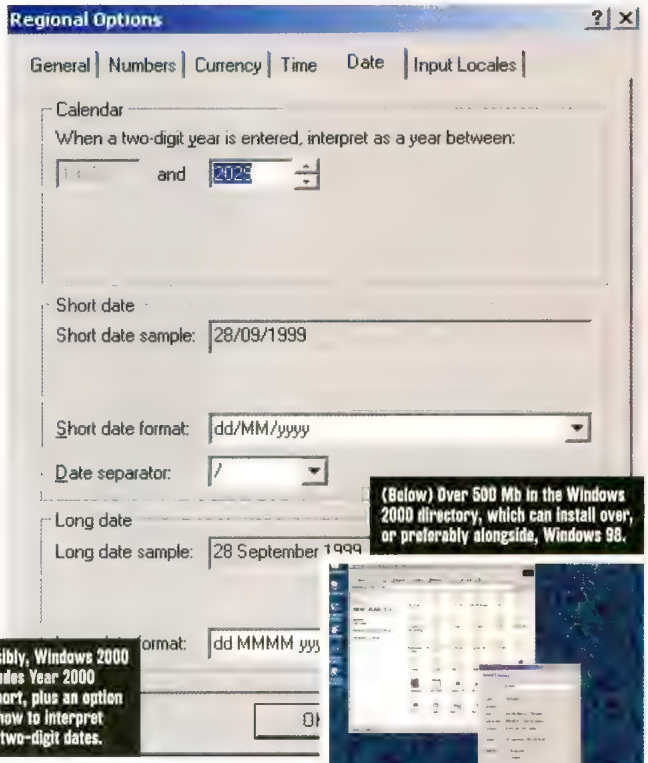
"EVEN THE RELEASE CANDIDATE WAS VERY STABLE AND SHOCKINGLY FAST."

Well, we're just a couple of months away from Windows 2000, so-called because it's Windows, and should be released in 2000. The thing is, despite the name, Windows 2000 isn't strictly an upgrade to Windows 95 or 98, and may cause a number of problems if you upgrade straight away.

Win2000 is actually an update to Windows NT, an office version of Windows 3.1 (the old one) with proper network support, servers, security and the like. It's truly 32-bit, while Win95 and 98 are 16/32-bit hybrids (by that we mean that DOS is still hidden under many of the functions). Install Windows 2000 and you lose the trusty old DOS box, and your old games like *Doom* and *Duke Nukem 3D*.

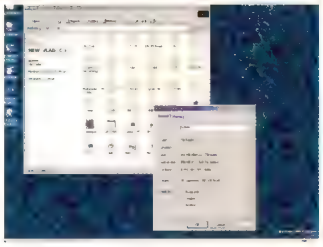
DirectX games should, in theory, work fine, although we couldn't get many test games to work at all on a beta version of Windows 2000. *Quake III Test* struggled to find working OpenGL drivers, and *Quake II* only worked in software. *Tiberian Sun* installed, but wouldn't run. Bear in mind, though, that these are early days and Microsoft is determined to fix these problems before release.

There are some benefits in moving to Win2000, though. Even though we were using a Release Candidate (virtually finished) version, it was exceedingly stable, and shockingly fast, although though it has higher system requirements (effectively a Pentium II with 64 Mb of RAM). Best of all, and call us



Sensibly, Windows 2000 includes Year 2000 support, plus an option for how to interpret any two-digit dates.

(Below) Over 500 Mb in the Windows 2000 directory, which can install over, or preferably alongside, Windows 98.



pathetic, we love the new graphical niceties like dissolving and fading of windows and menus, and the gentle shadow around the cursor. Well, it's the little things, isn't it?

The stability comes from the very specific list of supported hardware that will grow rapidly, but it didn't support my sound card or modem. When the operating system is officially released in January you can expect driver updates from most manufacturers.

It's not the end of the world for gamers, though. You can set your PC to boot into either Windows 2000 or Win95, so everything should keep working in one or the other, although Win2000 takes another 500 Mb of disk space.

Perhaps more important is for you to understand that there is a gamer's update to Windows coming soon. Windows 2000 is actually the name for a range of products, with the Professional edition being the one we tested this month. At the end of next year we are expecting a true sequel to Windows 98, known at the moment just through its codename Millennium. It's not expected to be that different to Win98 SE, though, the new version of Win98 released last month. There won't be any major Win3.1 to Win95 upgrades in a while.

Our advice, then? Leave Windows 2000 in the office for now. The lack of 100% compatibility outweighs the few improvements it offers. We will, however, be following the development of Windows 2000 and Millennium closely over the coming months.

DIRECT AND TO THE POINT

The latest version of Microsoft's DirectX driver software has now been released (it's on CD GAMER), and will be fully incorporated into Windows 2000.

Its primary purpose is to catch up with advances in graphics card technology, including support for hardware lighting, environment mapping (which means you get reflections, stained glass window effects and the like), support for stereo glasses (for really quite impressive 3D effects [redacted] playing with the Diablo pair and they're fab) and bump mapping.

Oh, and apparently it's faster too [redacted] e to point out that such a fantastic phrase comes from Microsoft, [redacted] t noticed any of our games running markedly quicker.

Perhaps more importantly on the games side is that DirectX 7 for your PC is fully compatible with DirectX 7 for Windows CE (the operating system used on the Sega Dreamcast). Many developers have been holding off on Dreamcast development for the release of DirectX 7, so there may now be a flurry of [redacted] development, including Dreamcast games available on the PC. We shall see.

You can download DirectX 7 from http://microsoft.com/directx/hom[redacted] downloads/default.asp but we've also included it on this month's CD. Check out the index on the back of the CD case for its location.

Microsoft Windows 2000 CD
Microsoft
Windows 2000
Professional
Install Windows 2000
Install Add-On Components
Browse This CD
Exit
Windows 2000
The new version of Windows sets the standard for reliability, speed, security, manageability and ease of use. Windows 2000 is packed with many new features and improvements to the current ones.
To perform a command, just click it.
Microsoft Windows 2000 CD
This CD-ROM contains a newer version of Windows than the one you are presently using.
Would you like to upgrade to Windows 2000?
Yes
No

The first screen you see when you pop the CD in. Jeepers, a decision to be made already.

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THE OFFICIAL PC GAMER TOP 20

C&C continues to be your favourite. But how long will it last?

1 (1)	Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun (EA)	PCG 73, 92%
2 NEW	System Shock 2 (EA)	PCG 75, 92%
3 (2)	Championship Manager 3 (Eidos)	PCG 68, 91%
4 (6)	Kingpin (Interplay)	PCG 73, 90%
5 (4)	Hidden And Dangerous (Take 2)	PCG 71, 93%
6 NEW	Cutthroats (Eidos)	PCG 76, 40%
7 (3)	Star Wars: The Phantom Menace (LucasArts)	PCG 71, 79%
8 (9)	Rollercoaster Tycoon (Hasbro)	PCG 68, 91%
9 (8)	Aliens Vs Predator (Fox)	PCG 68, 90%
10 (12)	Half-Life (Sierra)	PCG 63, 96%
11 (16)	Flight Simulator '98 (Microsoft)	PCG 49, 78%
12 (10)	Star Wars: Episode I – Racer (LucasArts)	PCG 72, 85%
13 RE	Delta Force (Novalogic)	PCG 67, 90%
14 NEW	Darkstone (EA)	PCG 75, 76%
15 NEW	GP 500 (Habro)	PCG 75, 91%
16 NEW	X: Beyond The Frontier (THQ)	PCG 75, 37%
17 RE	Age Of Empires Gold (Microsoft)	PCG 48, 92%
18 (7)	Civilization II: Test Of Time (Hasbro)	PCG 74, 79%
19 (13)	SimCity 3000 (EA)	PCG 66, 92%
20 (19)	Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver (Eidos)	PCG 74, 82%

YOUR MOST WANTED

Quake III reigns unchallenged, but it's all change among the chasing pack.

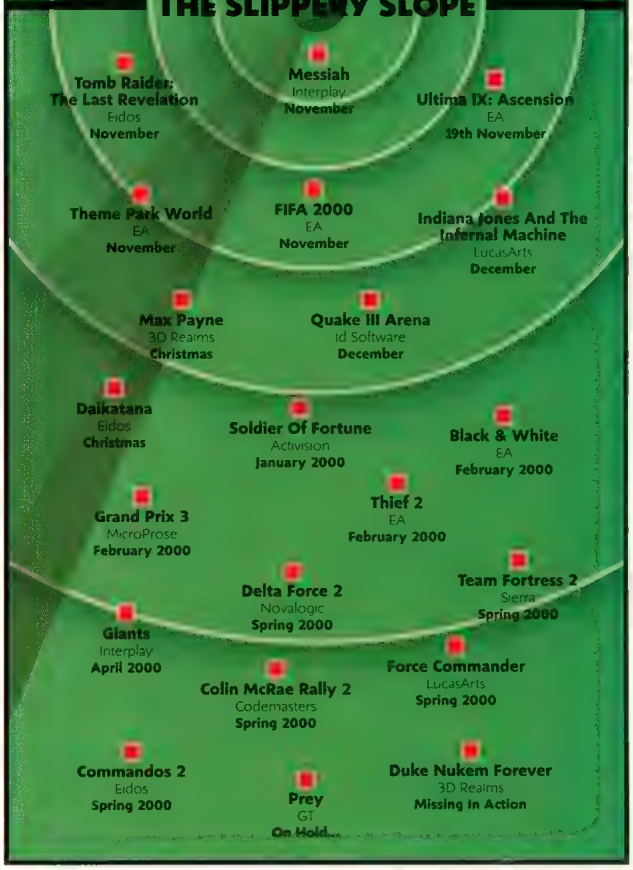
Away from the number one spot, where *Quake III* will surely rest until its release, the rest of the chart is in turmoil. With *GTA 2* and *Age Of Empires II* reviewed in this issue, the newest *Tomb Raider* instalment siezes the opportunity and makes a bid for the number two slot. Elsewhere, violence is on the agenda, with *Team Fortress 2*, *Soldier Of Fortune* and *SWAT 3* all putting themselves about. This month's winner is Dan Pearce, who'll win a copy of *Grand Prix 3*

Position	Game Wanted	Vote Share
1 (1)	Quake III Arena	19.3%
2 NEW	Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation	7%
3 (6)	Team Fortress 2	6.4%
4 (7)	Black & White	5.8%
5 NEW	Soldier Of Fortune	5.4%
6 (10)	Delta Force 2	4.7%
7 (9)	Grand Prix 3	4.7%
8 NEW	SWAT 3	4.1%
9 NEW	Colin McRae Rally 2	3.5%
10 (4)	Duke Nukem Forever	2.9%

Send your Most Wanted votes to:
My Most Wanted, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.
Or fill in the coupon on page 108.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE



FOREIGN CHARTS

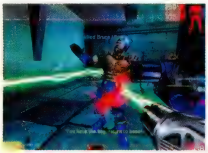
PC GAMER has many cousins all around the world. This month: the US and Brazil.

PC GAMER UNITED STATES	PC GAMER BRASIL BRAZIL
1. C&C: Tiberian Sun	1. Requiem
2. Rainbow Six Gold Edition	2. Heroes Of M&M III
3. Rollercoaster Tycoon	3. Civ: Call To Power
4. Starcraft	4. Myth 2: Soulblighter
5. Half-Life	5. Need For Speed: RC

PC GAMER

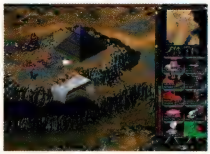
RECOMMENDED

In between producing the world's best magazine, we sometimes play games too. And these are the ones we like best.



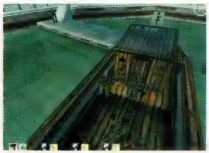
UNREAL TOURNAMENT (PCG 74, 92%)

As our *UT* skills have improved, we've begun taking on the higher levels of bots. After showing our complete mastery over the Masterful bots, and our, um, inhumanity over the Inhuman bots, we currently enjoy a good slapping about from the Godlike bots. They remind us that we're mere mortals.



C&C: TIBERIAN SUN (PCG 73, 92%)

It's getting rather hard to find a copy of this in the office. Not only does every other magazine in the company seem to have a desperate need for it, there is also a long list of 'Most Wanted' winners who are owed a copy. As a result, we've not played it much recently. Tell us what it's like, then, eh?



HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS (PCG 71, 93%)

Rich, our hard-man Art Editor, has finally managed to complete *Hidden And Dangerous* by persistently sneaking onto James' PC at lunchtimes. He's become something of an authority on the game, and particularly enjoyed designing the maps for our tips guide.

SYSTEM SHOCK 2 (PCG 75, 92%)

In terms of unpleasant noises, the screams of dying monkeys come pretty high on our list. Consequently, Kieron and Trev are under a perpetual barrage of sharp objects as the we ask them to turn their speakers down. Needless to say, any game that can terrify at a dozen paces has to be respected.

DRIVER (PCG 74, 90%)

Ah, the handbrake turn. A thing of such rare beauty, which must be mastered completely for success in *Driver*. Mark's worn out three handbrakes already on his car. Now we're all saving up for big American cars with bouncy suspension and squeaky tyres, as they seems to be the latest fashion accessory. Wakka, wakka, wakka, indeed.

GP 500 (PCG 75, 91%)

Hey, we're as mildly surprised as you. Who'd have thought that a motorbike sim could so effectively combine accessible high-octane thrills with the kind of anal simulation details which can keep even Matt Pierce quiet for a couple of days? Trevor and he are currently enjoying a vicious duel over lap times, scrapping over 1/100ths of a second.

SLIPPAGE CENTRAL

The greatest and, indeed, the latest games there are.

STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS

(Interplay)

Last month we revealed that *New Worlds* developers Binary Asylum have ceased trading due to financial troubles. But while Internet rumours claimed that their game had been canned, it appears Interplay are instead hauling *New Worlds* in-house in order to finish it without the original developers' involvement.

The publisher's strategy division, 14 degrees East, are now faced with the mammoth task of fathoming Binary's engine technology, and as a consequence the game's projected release date has slipped. November, they claimed. Phooey, say we. Don't expect to see this impressive 3D RTS until at least March of next year.

FIFA
ENGLAND
2

EA SPORTS FIFA 2000

GIMME NET-VIOLATING-AIR-SHREDDING-LIGHTNING STRIKES GIMME STUD-RUPTURED-TURF-CHURNING SHIN-SHEARING-TACKLES GIMME A-WIDE-AWAKE EYE-POPPING-GLOBAL-SPECTACLE GIMME FIFA

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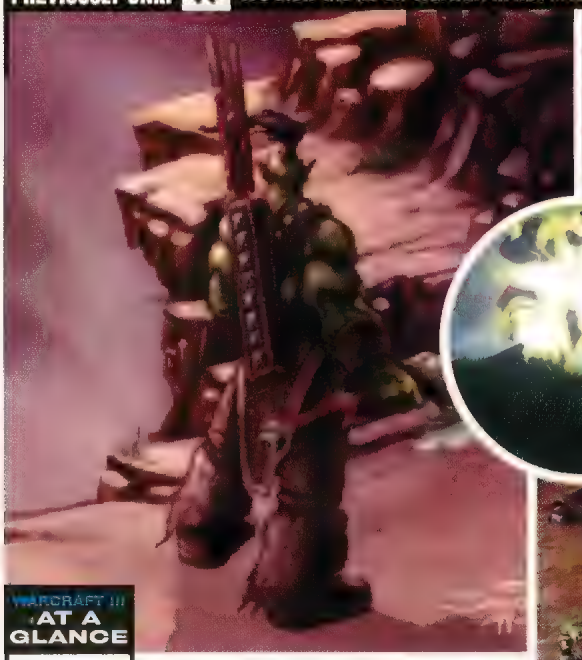
WARCRAFT III

The time has come to end the gossip. We bring you more hard-core facts from the chaps that so lovingly crafted it.

By MATTHEW PIERCE

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We blew the lid on *Warcraft III* last month (PCG 75) in an exclusive Scoop.



MANA O MANA

The RPG elements that are so conspicuous in *Warcraft III*'s design document even extend as far as scripted events and full dialogue sequences. NPCs will be used to indicate potential quests for you to take, as well as to further the constantly evolving single player story-line. New, neutral structures will also add an element of good old-fashioned exploration too. These buildings, including Monster Encampments, Temples, and Mana Fountains, aren't owned by any particular creatures; it's therefore a race (especially in multi-player) to reach them and utilise their resources first.

Some units you'll know, while others are new to the *Warcraft* world.

WARCRAFT III AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Sierra

Developer: Blizzard

Genre: RPS (Role-playing strategy)

Estimated Minimum System: P200, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card

Contact: www.blizzard.com

Release Date: Winter 2000

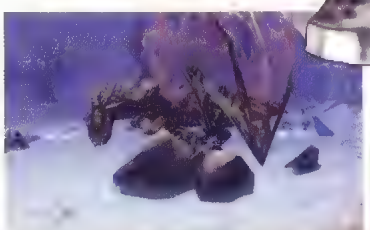
What's in it for you: Blizzard are attempting to push the real-time strategy genre in a more role-playing direction. A true 3D terrain engine provides the frills, while the hero-dominated strategy and more focused battles provide the thrills.

IT'S notoriously hard for game developers to keep secrets – especially concerning games that inspire such rabid loyalty in their fans. However, despite the presence of multiple web sites devoted to *Warcraft III* – many months before the game's official announcement – much of the content has remained a mystery. Until now, that is. Because Blizzard's Mike O' Brien, Lead Designer on *Warcraft III*, took time out from his hectic work schedule to talk exclusively to PC GAMER about arguably the most long-awaited game currently in development.

Further to last month's revelation that *Warcraft III* is to be an RPS (role playing strategy) game, O' Brien seeks to clarify that although taking the traditional RTS genre in a new direction, the game remains defiantly *Warcraft* in atmosphere.

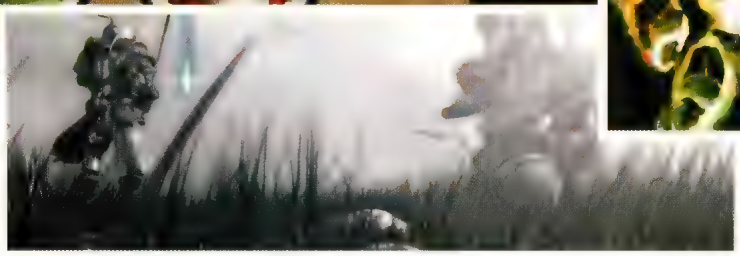
"We knew we were going in a different direction, and there was some concern that the hard-core fans would be disappointed, so we thought about calling it something else. In the end, we knew this was *Warcraft III*, and we'll just trust fans to follow this next step."

Perhaps one of the game's biggest surprises concerns the way it turns the generally accepted 'humans good, orcs bad' stereotype on its head. The inclusion of the orc character Thrall (one of the stars of the canned *Warcraft* Adventures) is used to reveal that the orcish hordes of *Warcraft II* were actually a demon-controlled race – quite unlike the brave, generally misunderstood people that feature in this sequel. According to O' Brien, it was a necessary narrative device to open up the series' natural boundaries. "In an effort to



Here be dragons. Or a dragon at the very least. It wouldn't be a fantasy game without one.

Rather than controlling all of your units, your heroes are now the main men.



"...A BIG, ROVING ARMY, SHATTERING DIMENSIONS AND MARAUDING WORLDS"

escalate the conflict and the scope of what *Warcraft* is, we had to rethink the situation between humans and orcs," he says.

It's this demonic faction, known as The Burning Legion, that supplies another choice of race in *Warcraft III*, described by O'Brien as "a big, roving army, shattering through dimensions and marauding worlds." Another three choices still remain under wraps.

As we mentioned last month, *Warcraft III* abandons the traditional resource management, building and unit control, to centre the action around heroes and their parties. The heroes are the only characters who can command your other units, as well as being able to embark on quests, carry objects in an inventory, and gain experience points to rise in power and influence. New ones can be recruited via quests or from towns, until you're simultaneously able to control a band of four, and the rising

TO PROTECT AND SERVE

Much of your starting environment in *Warcraft III* will be pre-placed when you begin each level. Home towns known as Keeps will be functioning, and you'll find units milling around just waiting to be recruited by your hero. Although there will be less in the way of building to be done, instantly recognisable *Warcraft* structures such as Farms, Lumber Mills, Docks, Mines and Guard Towers will be available to place in certain areas, and upgrading existing structures to produce more advanced units will also play an important role.

While your heroes can be killed in battle and resurrected quite happily when back at your Keep, once your town's been demolished, it's all over. Better look after it then, eh?

Terrain now plays an important tactical role.

As in *Warcraft II*, the style of terrain differs hugely through the game.

TALKING IN CODE

Lead Developer Mike O' Brien spills the magic beans on *Warcraft III*

PCG: In 20 words, why should we be excited about *Warcraft III*?
"Our goal has really been to combine a *Zelda*-quality single-player role-playing experience with a full-on multi-player RTS."

PCG: What's the one feature you're happiest with so far?
"We want to keep the core story-line intact from [the canned] *Warcraft* Adventures and let that story-line help us escalate the level of conflict for *Warcraft III*."

PCG: What kind of person will buy your game?
"We want this to be a mass-market game the same way that *Warcraft II* was. You don't reach the most people without having a product that will run well on low-end systems."

PRETTY POLYS

Warcraft II's colour[illegible] were bearable in 1996, but in de[illegible] gamers require a little more sophistication. So, each individual character in ***Warcraft III*** has been painstakingly modelled to look as sharp as it possibly can at any resolution. "We're pushing more polys than *Quake III*," says O' Brien. When incorporated into Blizzard's proprietary technology that scales the degree of detail depending on their dist[illegible], they [illegible] like that running.

"YOU WON'T REACH PEOPLE WITHOUT A PRODUCT THAT WILL RUN ON LOW-END SYSTEMS."

⇨ levels of power are especially important as the higher your hero is ranked, the more follower units he'll be able to manipulate.

Resources have changed as well. Out go wood and oil, leaving gold as the only true indicator of your community's wealth. How to come by gold has also altered, and it's now not only tapped from natural resource points, but can also be taken from defeated monsters

Although in theory it sounds more like a turn-based strategy game or an RPG, O' Brien is keen to give his view on how the genre is heading with *Warcraft III*. "When you think about it, real-time strategy evolved from wargames in a way that it really didn't have to. Because in reality, the RTS style of just pumping out units and throwing them into a meat grinder is pretty contrary to the way war works."

In reality, Blizzard are aiming for a heady mix of role-playing and strategy that use 3D technology but don't alienate low spec users. A formidable remit indeed.

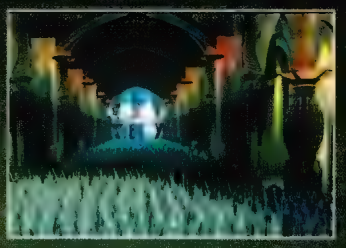
O' Brien also points out that *Warcraft III* is about fewer characters, with more importance placed on each of them. No more than 20 units should ever be seen battling on-screen in the game, but the fracas should never be less exciting than the previous game's. "In an RPG, you don't just control a town, you interact with it. If you lose a party member, it's a big deal to you Most importantly though, the whole world is an active, lived-in place. It's not just a map."

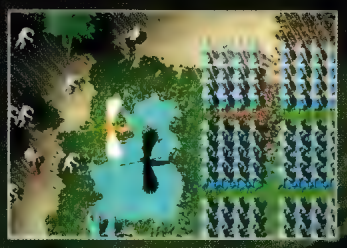
Few of the features Blizzard propose could realistically be described as ground-breaking, although the style in which they're being executed – utilising a next generation graphics engine and in true 3D – could see a genre-defining title being born · paving the way for a new breed of strategy game. Only time will tell.

One sole quest, Victory

One sole strategy, Power

Black Moon Chronicles





"A truly epic Wargame" -PC Gamer

"It's a battle game on an epic scale" -PC Format

"A refreshingly different real-time fantasy battle game" -PC Gaming World

"Epic scope, great artwork and big fantasy battles" -Total Control

"On to a winner" -PC Zone

PC CD

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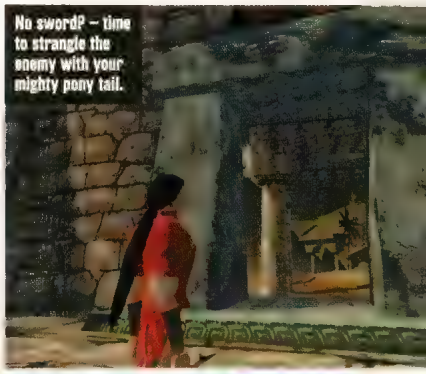
GALLEON

This must be the sail of the century.

By CHRIS BUXTON


No sword? – time to strangle the enemy with your mighty pony tail.

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We first ran *Galleon* up the flagpole way back in PCG 61

Twee ports and towns such as this are just waiting to be visited, explored, ransacked and left in tatters.

GALLEON AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Virgin

Developer: Confounding Factor

Genre: Third-person action adventure

Estimated Minimum System: P200, 32Mb RAM, 3D card

Contact: www.confounding-factor.com

Release Date: Spring 2000

What's in it for you: Buccaneering and then swashbuckling aplenty as the men who made *Tomb Raider* return to the genre they created. Seamless fluidity – in both animation and gameplay, is promised, – along with more island paradises than every Bounty commercial put together.

WHETHER you love or loathe Lara Croft, there's no denying the original game was a fantastic concept and a cracking game to boot. Step forward Toby Gard and Paul Douglas of Confounding Factor, who created the first *Tomb Raider* at Core then decamped to Bristol, leaving Lara behind, determined to create the new bench-mark in the genre they helped create. Quite literally, it was a case of 'tits out for the lads'. (Oh, how I've longed to get that one in.)

Galleon is a third-person-perspective action adventure, and as the *Tomb Raider* series sought to plunder the heritage of the Indiana Jones flicks, so *Galleon* cherry picks the world of pirates for material. Our hero, Captain Rhama Sabrier, is a mariner, warrior and cartographer of uncharted waters Rhama has been called to the port of Akbah by a famous hea·er to discover the origins of a mysterious ship and its precious cargo More than this, we don't know, since Confounding Factor and Virgin (who took over the project from Interplay) are remaining tight-lipped about *Galleon*

It's clear Gard and Douglas have lavished attention upon their proprietary animation system, which is designed to give the *Galleon* characters an unprecedented amount of possible actions and moves that, in turn, are intended to make the gameplay very fluid and responsive. Leaping, running, swimming, climbing and, ahem, 'swinging' are all featured, along with a sophisticated sword-fighting system.

Confounding Factor's experience and desire promise much, as does the rich story which mixes skeleton warriors, ghostly shipwrecks and naval battles with legendary gods and folklore. But as the disappointing *Shadowman* recently proved, talking a good talk is one thing, walking the walk – or swashing the buckle, in this case – is another thing entirely. We'll find out early next year whether *Galleon* has the seas to itself or is just another also-sailed. PCG

Buildings are fittingly mock-Tudor.

THREE DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERS

Whilst *Galleon's* pre-launch publicity has focused on the character of Rhama, the screenshots and artwork imply that he's not your sole focus of the game, – you can control two of his crew members as well. The characters Faith and Miholco are prominently featured in the new artwork for *Galleon* which implies the possibility – perhaps the necessity – of playing as one or both of these characters at some point in the game.

Swashbuckle? Belt buckle, more like...

"LEAPING, RUNNING, SWIMMING, CLIMBING AND, AHEM, 'SWINGING' ARE ALL FEATURED HERE."

HMV

thechallengecontinues...

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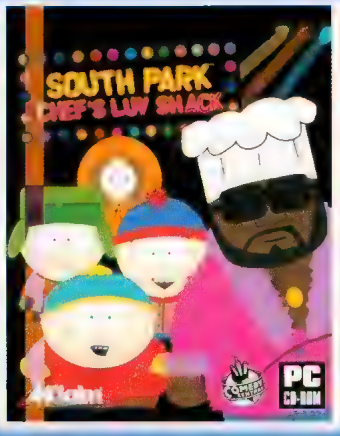
Aliens Vs Predator

Battle in the dark as one of three uniquely versatile species - Aliens, Predators or Marines - in a terrifying atmosphere straight from the blockbuster movies. Play the deadliest hunters ever in an intensely unforgettable single and multiplayer experience. "A stunningly well realised and extremely tense Al Lewis Total Film" PC Gamer 90% - Game Of Distinction.

Battlezone II

In 1998 Battlezone took command of the PC platform. In 1999 its sequel leads the charge into the next dimension of war games. Battlezone II intensifies the revolutionary first-person action strategy of the original with breathtaking graphics, enhanced multiplayer gameplay, a simplified interface and many action packed



South Park: Chef's Luv Shack

Cast Kenny, the gameshow host in this insane multiplayer game. Choose Cartman, Stan, Kyle or Kenny and test your skills in dozens of mini-challenges, such as Spank The Monkey with Mr Mackey and Booty In Space with Timmy & Jimmy. Featuring hundreds of South Park sound effects for the game by Trey Parker, Matt Stone and Isay Peters.

Half Life: Opposing Force

The official expansion pack for *Half-Life*. Become one of the soldiers that Gordon Freeman battled against in the original. Separated from your unit, you become isolated and disoriented in a whole new alien race set to plague Earth from Black Mesa. This add-on features a vast new range of artillery, fantastic multiplayer action and the interaction that made Half-Life one of the games of 1998.

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DELTA FORCE 2

It's the soldier sim designed for the more action-orientated gentleman, and it'll be back! Soon!

By JAMES ASHTON

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We first peeked behind *Delta Force 2's* curtain back in issue 72's Eyewitness section.

Shooting trains is always more fun than spotting them.

DELTA FORCE 2 AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Novalogic

Developer: In-house

Genre Action/strategy

Estimated Minimum System: PII 266, 64Mb RAM

Contact: www.novalogic.com

Release Date: February

What's in it for you: Soldier simulation with the accent heavily on immediate action rather than intensive planning and multi-soldier strategic movement.

FOR originality's sake, it would be nice to start a discussion about soldier sims without mentioning *Hidden And Dangerous* in the opening sentence. It'd be nice, but sadly, downright impossible. Take 2's game stands as a colossus over this fledgling genre – all roads lead back to it, and all comparisons must start there.

So here we go. The original *Delta Force* pre-dated *HAD* by some months and took a far more action-orientated run-up to the idea of a squad-based, objective-driven, first-person tactical shoot-em-up. While there were brothers-in-arms to help you in your SAS-style sabotage, search-and-destroy type missions, you could leave them in the safe care of the computer while you played the all-American hero. It was a gripping piece of work, with Voxel graphics allowing sweeping battlefields and headshots from over half a kilometre away.

Given the success of the first game, it's no surprise that *Delta Force 2* is shaping up to be a more-or-less straight sequel. The emphasis is still on you, the lone specialist taking on most of the dirty work while your less-illustrious mates lay down some covering fire. The Voxel game engine has been polished up and tweaked to take advantage of your 3D card, which would otherwise be completely superfluous silicon in your PC. So far, so good.

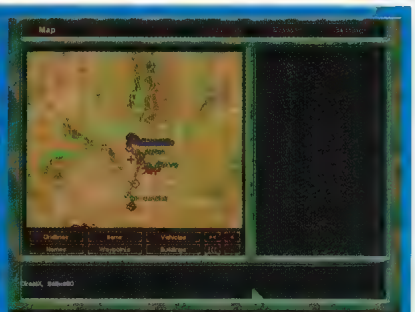
As far as game structure goes, the motto appears to be more of the same. There will be 40 all-new single-player missions, set in similar rolling battlefields to the first game, along with the addition of underwater sequences. Other innovations sound minor, but include fixed heavy weapon emplacements that you can overrun and turn on their original owners, along with destructible buildings and varying weather conditions. Oh, and as well as you and your squad parachuting into the start of the level, enemy reinforcements can drop in on silken sheets as well, disrupting the best-laid ground clearance plans.

Net gamers will be well catered for with what is probably the game's biggest single gameplay advance. Using Novalogic's server system, Novaworld, up to 50 players can play multi-player scenarios on one battlefield shooting each others' brains out from across the horizon. The prospect of huge multi player games is fascinating: can that number of gamers really play as organised teams in tightly-fought attacking or defensive

TAKING COMMAND

While the original *Delta Force* left you happy in the knowledge that your fellow squad members would look after themselves, following their own objectives and generally playing a supporting role to your heroics, *Delta Force 2* aims to introduce a little more control to the proceedings.

At the moment, the Commander screen is little more than a map of the operational area with your objectives and comrades marked as little military-style symbols. Quite how far you'll be able take command of the field remains to be seen, but we here at GAMER hope the team go for an all-or-nothing approach.



Contours, enemy troops and vehicles, insertion points, fellow troops – the Command screen can be a complex beast. Will this addition detract from *Delta Force's* beautiful simplicity, we wonder?

Go on! Lug him one in the ear. Teach him to use that grass to better effect.

(Left) Science: the most dangerous profession in computer games.

Call that camouflage? No grass here, though.

scenarios, or will it just degenerate into an all-against-all snipe-fest?

For fans of *Delta Force's* over-arching simplicity, there's worrying news. *Delta Force 2* is set to include a new Commander screen, allowing the gamer an overview of each mission as it's played. At this stage, it's not clear whether this screen will be just for information, or whether a degree of control can now be exerted over the rest of your team. Games like *Rainbow Six*, *Rogue Spear* and *Hidden And Dangerous* all offered more scope for mission planning and execution than *Delta Force* and were different - though not necessarily better – games for it

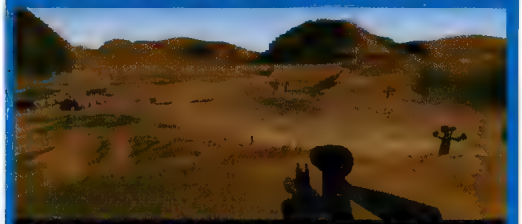
A great part of *Delta Force's* appeal is that it was a simple game to get into and play. We hope Novalogic won't interfere with the mix simply because other games have gone about things in a different way. If intense pre match planning - like that seen in *Rogue Spear* -- comes into play in *Delta Force*, a lot of die-hard fans might be disappointed. Hopefully, though, Novalogic's crack team of designers and programmers will strike the right balance between moving the game on and maintaining the philosophy that made the first such a success.

We'll be keeping an eye on *Delta Force 2's* progression over the coming few months. If there are any significant developments between now and its February release, we'll let you know as soon as we do

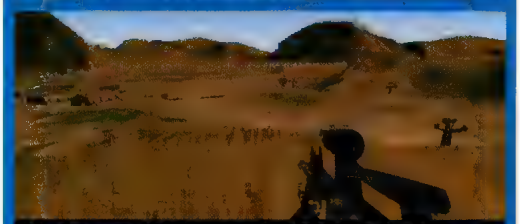
"THE EMPHASIS IS STILL ON YOU, THE LONE SPECIALIST, TAKING ON MOST OF THE DIRTY WORK."

SUPERGRASS

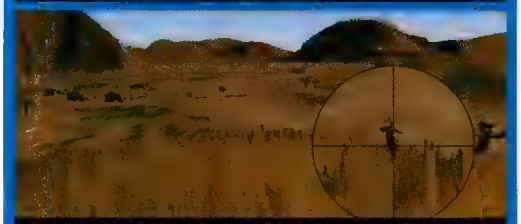
On the face of it, the addition of 'long grass' doesn't appear to be a major step forward in game design. However, as you'll find if you play this month's cover demo, it does have its strategic uses.



This hill commands a fine view of your target. However, you're also a little exposed, standing up and lurching about like that.



Take the prone position, however, and you'll disappear from your enemies' sight like a snake in the grass. The poor saps.



Using you sniper scope and some wriggling about on the floor, you can now blow out brains from 300 metres in perfect safety.

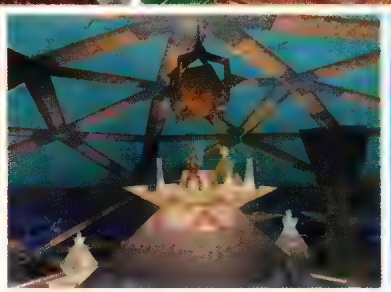
ULTIMA IX: ASCENSION

Ultima prepares to take its place in RPG heaven.

By KIERON GILLEN

PREVIOUSLY ON... << The last time we strolled the streets of *Ultima IX: Ascension* was back in PCG 59.

The final meeting with Lord British is sure to be dramatic.
Selecting the far wall will describe your previous adventures.



ULTIMA IX ASCENSION AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Origin

Genre: Role-playing

Estimated Minimum System: P200, 64Mb, 3D card

Contact: www.ultima-ascension.com

Release Date: November

What's in it for you: 100 hours of adventure in the final installment of the most respected PC RPG series ever made.

ULTIMA is almost as old as me. Can anyone think of another series of games that's old enough to vote? Or buy a beer? Or drive a car? I thought not. Of course, what's interesting about *Ultima* is that it's an RPG that's constantly managed to push back the borders of the fantasy kingdom. The fact that the most elaborate on-line experience emerged from the *Ultima* line should really be no surprise at all.

However, it's been five years since we wandered through the dark lands of *Ultima VIII: Pagan*, which was decried by the Rabid Dragons (the hardest of the hardcore *Ultima* fans) as a watered-down abomination of what the series was really about. What's interesting is that Richard Garriott, its creator, shows real sympathy with this view. He claims he felt pressurised into releasing the game well before it was ready

Looking at *Ultima IX*, it appears that history is *not* going to repeat itself. Don't let the graphical panache and the rumours about the early action/adventure demos shown at previous trade shows confuse you. This promises to be the most elaborate and sophisticated *Ultima* yet

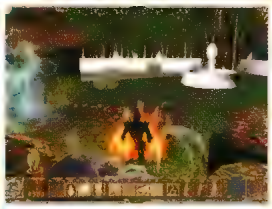
For a start, the entire real-world model which characterises the series is intact. Yes, you will still be able to bake

WHAT THE HELL IS IT ALL ABOUT, THEN?

One of the best things about *Ultima* is that, once we progressed past the third, there's always been a more philosophical element to the plot-line than 'Kill kobolds, get gold, snog princess'. For example, *Ultima VI: The False Prophet* was all about social tolerance, while *Ultima VII* proposed that to maintain society's cohesion it's better to educate everyone. But what's the Big Idea behind *Ultima IX*? If we told you – we'd have to kill you. Let's just mumble that it neatly resolves the dilemma of being the *final* Ultima game in its epic trilogy of trilogies. Hmm.

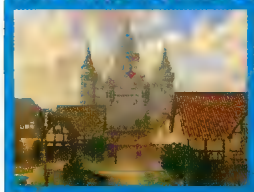
Once you acquire a boat, the areas you're able to travel to are greatly increased.

(Below) Incy-wincy spider... climbing up... NO! YOU'RE...ARGH!



NEW WORLD ORDER

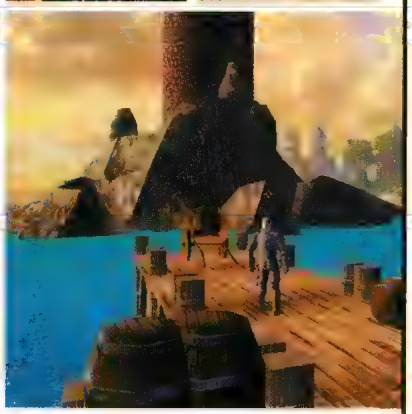
Or not, as the case may be. Previous adventurers to the land of Britannia will recognise a number of locations you may choose to frequent. Here's a selection of potential holiday destinations.



BRITAIN: Ruling seat of Lord British himself and home to the most traditionally medieval approach to architecture. One sore point is the incessant playing of a phrase from 'Rule Britannia' in its soundtrack. Erk.

MOONGLOW: This is the town with the slightly wussy name in which mages like to hang with their spellcasting crews. Minor enchantments abound. The floating platforms instead of staircases are particularly jolly.

SKARA BRAE: A fallen city, reclaimed by the wilds. Also features some Planet of the Apes-style buried statues, and lots of savage creatures to whack with the nearest hard, heavy and blunt instrument.



TALKING IN CODE

Seth Mendelsohn lead designer on *Ultima IX*, speaks to us

In 20 words, why should we be excited about *Ultima IX*?

Seeing Britannia for the first time in 3D after 20 years of *Ultima* is awesome!

What's your favourite feature so far?

The interactive music. The 8 cities of virtues each have a theme based on TLC or FHC (Truth, Love and Courage or Falsehood, Cowardice, and Hatred), depending on the state of the world

Which games have been your inspiration?

For me, past *Ultimas* (especially *5*), *Zelda*, *Syphon Filter*, and *Diablo*.

What kind of person will buy *Ultima IX*?

There's no question that the hard core *Ultima* fans will enjoy *Ascension*, but also people who like 3D games such as *Mario 64* will enjoy a 3D game that's more then just running and jumping.

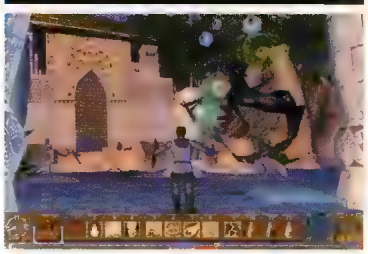
"IT PROMISES TO BE THE MOST ELABORATE AND SOPHISTICATED *ULTIMA* THERE'S EVER BEEN."

bread by painstakingly following the natural cut-wheat-cook-dough process. In fact the impression of realism is increased through the game's use of a realistic physics model; which makes all the objects fall and bounce convincingly. Equally, there's no dead space in the map of the world, such as 'impassable' mountain ranges to block your progress- theoretically you can *always* climb them, even if that means spending hours collecting objects to build a wobbly improvised staircase

Another major worry for purists was that traversing 3D terrain would lead to even more arcade-style (i.e. bad) elements than *Ultima VIII*. Instead, a semi-automatic jumping system has been put in place. You're able to move your cursor to where you wish to land. If it's possible, it will remain green. If it's not, it'll change to amber (you can throw there) or red (you're having a laugh). One tap then sends the Avatar flying across the gap. It's designed to make the game just as much of a challenge for the mind as the reflexes.

The skies fade smoothly from day to night.

The giant rods are central to the plot. You need to get rid of twelve of them, see.



However, this doesn't exactly mean it's a one-way excursion deep into the kingdom of anality. A great deal of effort has been put into slowly introducing the game's complexity. For example, you begin the game in your house, with no control icons on screen. Then, for the first twenty minutes, you're slowly introduced to each concept You're butt naked as well, but I don't really have the time or space to talk about that right now. Unfortunately.

YOUR TEAM HAS BEEN DROPPED DEEP BEHIND ENEMY LINES
ON A MERCENARY CONTRACT JOB...YOU'VE SUFFERED
HORRENDOUS LOSSES...YOU'VE RETREATED TO THE PICK-UP POINT...
BUT THERE'S NO CHOPPER, AND A MESSAGE STATING -
"YOUR UNIT HAS BEEN DEFUNDED". YOU'RE IN TROUBLE...

. . . IT'S PAYBACK TIME!

Shadow Company

Left for Dead

UNLEASHED SEPTEMBER 1999

- Take control of **up to twelve mercs at a time**, each with their own weapon preferences and **detailed skills**, but also personality and background.
- **Intuitive gameplay** allows to easily perform **spectacular feats**: creep up behind guards unnoticed, ambush patrols and generally wreak unseen havoc upon your enemies.

PC CD

Ubi Soft web site: www.ubisoft.co.uk

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FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2000

The scoop on *Flight Simulator* from your super soar-away PC GAMER!

By STEVE OWEN

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We took a quick turn around the airfield back in PCG 71.

Almost as popular as *Pac-Man*, or even *Tetris*. Wow.

FS2000 AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Microsoft

Developer: In-house

Genre: Um, flight sim

Estimated Minimum System: P166, 32Mb RAM, 400Mb HD

Contact: www.microsoft.com/games/fs2000/

Release Date: November

What's in it for you: If you *must* navigate an Atlantic crossing, but can't afford to do it for real, then there's no alternative to this. Also, don't forget that *Flight Simulator* has the largest range of third party add-ons to enhance it.

IT'S estimated that Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* range is just about the most popular game ever made. Apart from *Tetris*, or maybe *Pac-Man*. It's popular though. So sure enough, just as eggs is eggs, our calendar transition into the year 2000 welcomes the addition to the non-combat crowd of *Flight Simulator 2000*.

Yep, there's *still* nothing to shoot down, but you can do just about anything a pilot can conceivably do, including flying your jumbo underneath the Golden Gate Bridge, (something we would recommend doing in a game rather than in real life).

The graphics engine now takes advantage of the latest 3D cards, including a terrain engine, which gently blends textures so you can't see the joins.

There are new aircraft - Concorde and the Boeing 777 – alongside the old favourites, all with new sound and modelling. You can even look back at your smiling passengers, but can't scare them by pretending to be blind. The airports have been bumped up, from 3,000 to 20,000, with London, Paris, New York, Chicago, LA and San Francisco beautifully and accurately modelled. A new weather system is completely editable, including the ability to add a number of cloud layers using drag and drop. You can even download accurate weather reports from the Internet.

Meanwhile, the map screen lets you drag your aircraft to wherever in the world you want to go today.If you fancy learning to fly, *Flight Sim 2000* gets you closer than ever. It features Rod Machado, a hilariously cheesy instructor who gives proper lessons, and gives you certificates as you do them. Obviously, in the real world the certificates aren't worth the paper you wouldn't bother printing them on.

The game comes in two flavours. A £20 more expensive, 'professional' edition has two more aircraft, extra detail for six more cities, and editors to fiddle with the flight dynamics and the instrument panels Nice. The finished 'game' should be in our next issue. Fingers crossed

AND THERE'S MORE

While you can blow good cash on the latest *Flight Simulator*, there are plenty of ways of keeping yourself occupied with your old version and a bit of fruitful Internet searching.

For instance, sign up to be a pilot for a virtual airline, delivering passengers or cargo to work your way up the rankings. Or download thousands of other aircraft types, new airfields, and enhanced scenery files. Basically, whatever your particular flight sim poison, someone somewhere is into it even more than you are.

For more details visit the web site at www.fs2000.com/index.html for links.

"THERE'S STILL NOTHING TO SHOOT DOWN, BUT YOU CAN DO ALMOST ANYTHING A PILOT CAN."

"Hello Houston, we have a problem. Leslie Nielsen is on board. I repeat, Leslie Nielsen."

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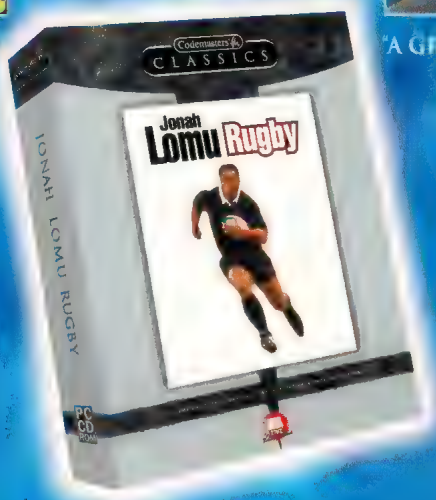

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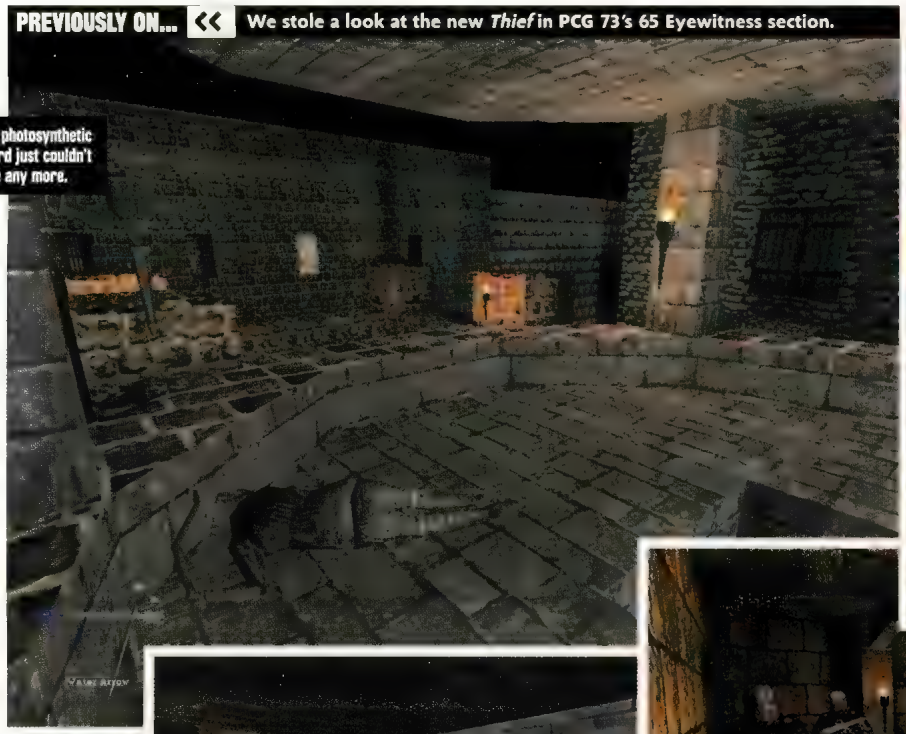
THIEF 2: THE METAL AGE

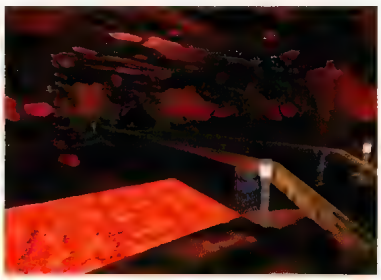
A future classic lurking in the shadows of the PC world?

By KIERON GILLEN

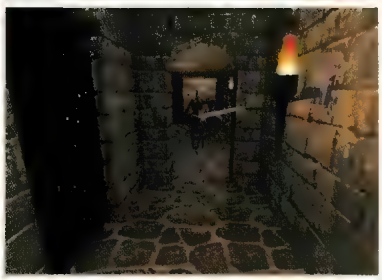
PREVIOUSLY ON... << We stole a look at the new *Thief* in PCG 73's 65 Eyewitness section.



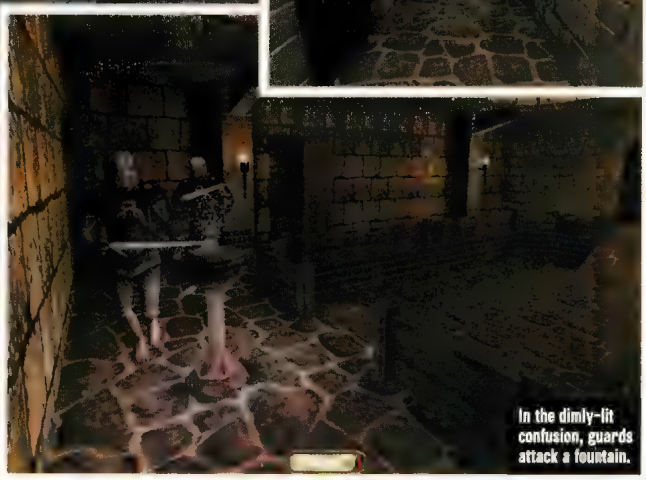
The photosynthetic guard just couldn't take any more.



(Above) Lovely coloured lighting, courtesy of lava. (Below) Once spotted, you won't be left alone.



(Right) You want a nice 100 watt bulb in there, mate.



In the dimly-lit confusion, guards attack a fountain.

HOSTILE WATERS AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Eidos

Developer: Looking Glass

Genre: First-person Shooter

Estimated Minimum System: P200, 32Mb RAM, 3D card

Contact: www.lglass.com

Release Date: February 2000

What's in it for you: Sneak sneak sneak sneak sneaky sneaky sneak. Night vision will come in handy since it's sure to be dark and sneaky.

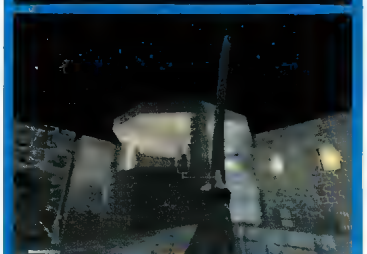
THIEF. **Everyone who played it loved it. All eight of them. That's the received wisdom, anyway. But is it right? In our last reader's top 100 it appeared above games as massive as *Tomb Raider*. Its sales have, rather appropriately, been slow and stealthy enough to avoid too much attention. The sequel seems set to make a larger impact with its honed design and subtle changes.**

Most of the game's sixteen levels are set around entering museums and houses in the gothic urban expanses of 'The City', and tend to be small and intense. When you go up against non-human guards their verbal feedback is to be enhanced, so you understand what they're actually *thinking*.

Equally, there's going to be lots of improvements in the guards' AI. Interestingly, the original was sophisticated enough *already* to allow guards to notice if doors have been opened or torches extinguished. This feature wasn't included just to give you a bit of a break. On higher difficulty levels this time you'll be lucky to slink your way past 'em.

So it's fortunate that Garrett's got a whole new bag of toys. Many of these are to help you case the joint before entering. My personal favourite is almost certainly a mechanical eye, which veterans of the series will remember from the last game's final cut scene. It features a zoom, distance compensation when using the bow and a handy infra-red night-vision mode. An unconfirmed rumour suggests a robotic ear might appear, but we're sceptical about that. You're also able to use cameras to remotely survey a scene - which makes you wonder if the places you're infiltrating will use some *System Shock 2* style automatic defences.

THE ART OF DARKNESS



The problem with the *Thief* games is hinted at by the original's subtitle: *The Dark Project*. No matter how exciting a moment might be to play through, when you take a screenshot all you get is an expanse of blackness. So much so that, in some of these early shots it reached whole new levels of ridiculousness.

(Below) The well-modelled town. At night, natch.

"IT'S FORTUNATE THAT MASTER-THIEF GARRETT HAS A WHOLE NEW BAG OF TOYS TO PLAY WITH."

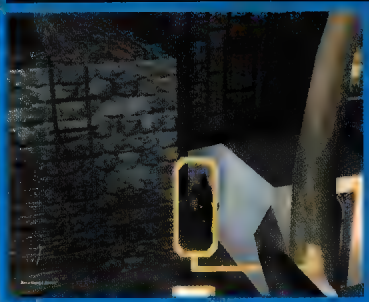
(Above) It's one of the Men In Black... But which one?

Also in master thief Garrett's festive sack is the vine arrow, which functions in a similar way to the rope arrow, but will hold fast to a wider variety of surfaces. Additionally, a catfall potion lets Garrett fall from a great height without snapping his knees, and there's the obvious uses of an invisibility potion as well. Expect some swanky new explosive devices too.

On a visual level, it's also taken several steps forward. The improved coloured lighting and 16 bit colouring will make the darkness look even darker.

Co-operative multi-player is bound to be an option, playing on its own special difficulty levels with puzzles that a team can solve... so let's cut to the chase. *Thief* is the sequel to one of last year's finest games. We're having trouble waiting for it. PCG

THIEF VS THIEF



While only co-operative multi-player is confirmed, it's interesting to note that Eidos' official press release states that *competitive* games are also to be included. While almost certainly a typo, the possibility is rather interesting. Slow-mo death match frenzy ahoy? Arf. If you think about it though, there's a number of promising possible game modes. How about a race to steal an object first? Or, most promisingly, a Spy vs. Spy styled mode where you can lay traps for each other. Since the engine supports variable translucency, opponents could fade in and out to simulate how hidden a thief is. Cool.

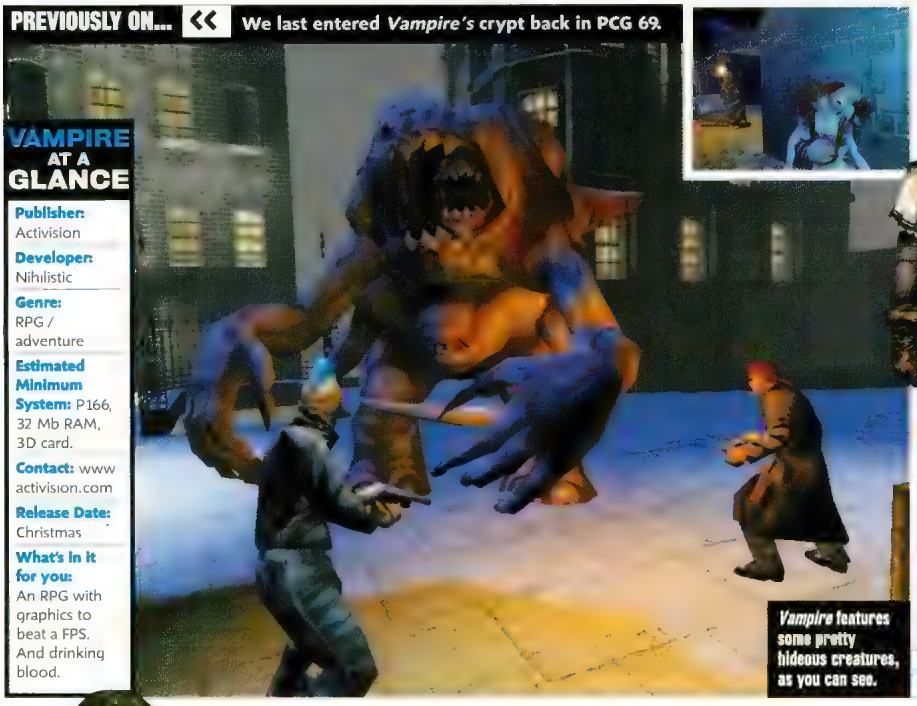
steal

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION

Stakes and garlic at the ready?

By JOHN WALKER

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We last entered *Vampire's* crypt back in PCG 69.



Vampire features some pretty hideous creatures, as you can see.

VAMPIRE AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Activision

Developer: Nihilistic

Genre: RPG / adventure

Estimated Minimum System: P166, 32 Mb RAM, 3D card.

Contact: www activision.com

Release Date: Christmas

What's in it for you: An RPG with graphics to beat a FPS. And drinking blood.

I WANT TO BE A GOOD GUY

Christof isn't your average mmmmm, must eat flesh, type vampire. He's a guy with integrity, and a deep desire to find out what the heck it's all about. While it's fun to rush about drinking the blood of mortals until they flop limply to the floor, too much of this behaviour will lead to the insatiable beast that lies deep within yourself) rampaging out of control. Bring on the Humanity Rating. The more evil and selfish you are, the more difficult Christof becomes to control, until eventually you will possess an insane rampaging monster, incapable of completing the game. Tact is necessary, taking a little blood from here and there, or perhaps 'borrowing' some from a friend. A vampire for the nineties, perhaps.

VAMPIRES have got to be inherently cool. They stalk the night, have pointy teeth, drink blood, and wear cloaks that swish a lot. Ideal for a game. Yet there's a mighty big hole in the PC market, emitting only the hollow rattle of *Gabriel Knight, Legacy of Kain* and other such offerings. But wait! (Cue eerie music.) Who are those figures standing in the shadows? It's... Can it be... Nihilistic? *VMR*, the first project from Ray Gresko's new software company, looks as though it's going to be a bit good. You take on the role of Christof, a religious knight suffering a crisis of faith, and through some misfortune (dying), must feed off the blood of mortals, and yet control the beast within. Split into two acts, The Dark Age and The Modern Day, you explore through 800 years across a number of cities around the world, finishing in New York, New Years Eve, 1999.

The main challenge facing Nihilistic is to do justice to the massively popular role-playing card game that the licence is taken from. Not being ones to shy away from a challenge, they have taken the genes from an RPG, an old point 'n' click adventure and a first-person shooter, and spliced them together in a suitably sinister laboratory to create what must be a whole new genre.

VMR's most impressive aspect is that so much effort has been put in at every level. 'You don't need good graphics and sound, when the gameplay is so strong,' is the kind of phrase you'll hear from many an RPG fan. But why this should this be the case? Why shouldn't an RPG receive the same level of effort in its presentation as your average first-person shooter? Happily, things are being put to rights. *Vampire* is positively

Character models are stunningly solid and 3-D.

Looks like our heroes just walked into the wrong nightclub.

"EVERY SURFACE IS RENDERED WITH SO MUCH DETAIL YOU'LL WANT TO JUST SIT AND STARE."

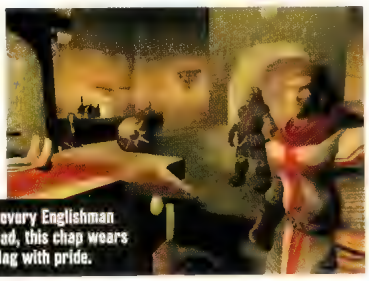
exp oding with sty e, cutting edge 3D graphics, ingenious new character skins,and eighty minutes of darkly atmospheric music to prope you nead-first into a story of truly epic proport ons.

Controls are s mple and ntu tive, mostly carr ed out by the mouse, cutting down on the need for two handed keyboard juggling The camera follows the action swift y and eff c ently, ingeniously a low ng you to take over at any time if someth ng out the corner of your eye catches your attent on And believe me, things wil Each and every surface is rendered w th so much effort that you wil want to just sit and stare N hilistic also claim that conversations and puzz es can be carried out in a var ety of ways, and your actions throughout the game determine how others treat you and, ultimately, how the game will end

We haven't even mentioned the multi-play yet. *VMR* on-line will allow one individual to play the Story Teller, the almighty controller of the action for others to play within. As Story Teller you are able to create and destroy objects and creatures at wi , constantly updating and manipulating the game as the other players explore their way through

This should allow a gaming arena where nothing is fixed and no ending determined, surely creating new breed of on l ne gameplay Those nice boys at N.hilistic are also releasing the game with ts build program (a var ant of QE Radiant) for you to build your own levels straight away Very decent of them.

We've started growing fangs already in antic pation. Feel free to insert your own 'sink our teeth in' joke here PCG



Like every Englishman abroad, this chap wears his flag with pride.

TALKING IN CODE

[redacted]

PCG: In 20 words, why should we be excited about *VMR*?

It's just cool to be a vampire. To experience all the powers while dealing with all the disadvantages

PCG: What's the one feature you're happiest with so far?

Creating the right dramatic environment. When the dialogue and music and atmosphere are put together, it's all there

PCG: Which games have been your inspiration?

Diablo was so inventive and accessible and lots of FPS's as well Oh, and *Legend of Zelda* and *Final Fantasy* showed us how to integrate a story-line into atmospheric gameplay

PCG: What kind of person would buy your game?

I hope everyone, not just hardcore Vampire card game players, though they'll help to push the multi play It's easily open to anyone

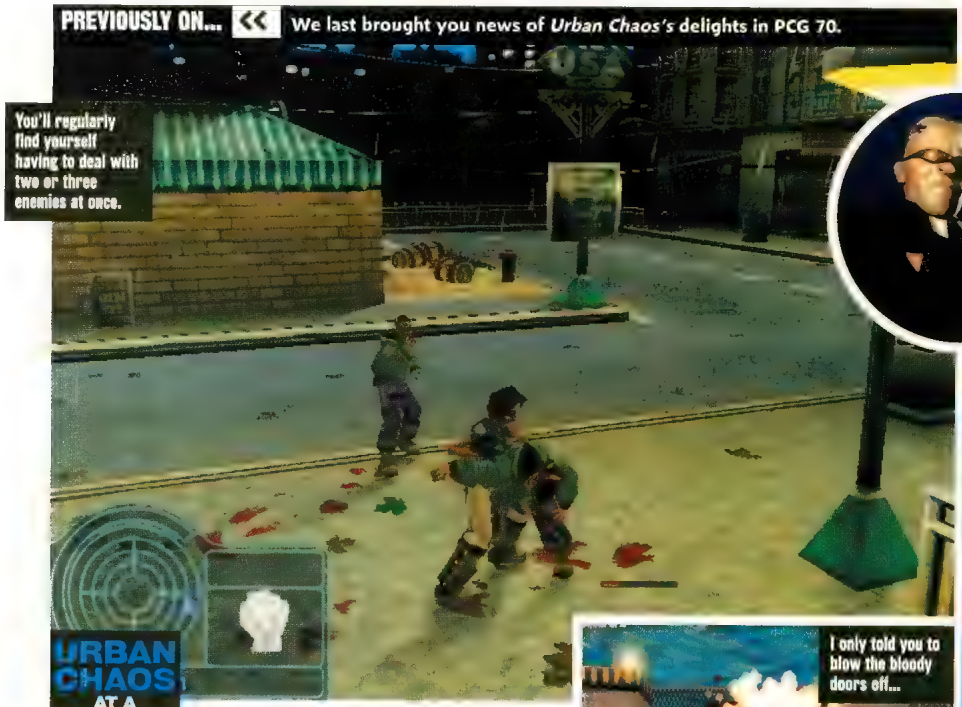
this

URBAN CHAOS

There's panic on the streets of Union City. For once, it's got nothing to do with Morrissey.

By MATTHEW PIERCE

PREVIOUSLY ON... We last brought you news of *Urban Chaos's* delights in PCG 70.



A MUGGER'S GAME

As well as controlling the two cop heroes throughout the game, you're also given the chance to play for the bad guys. Certain missions see you as common thugs who want to cause the local police force as much trouble as possible. Say hello, then, to objectives that include beating up the rozzers, driving car bombs to drop-off points, and snatching handbags from old dears.

URBAN CHAOS AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Eidos

Developer: Mucky Foot

Genre: Action adventure

Estimated Minimum System: P233, 32Mb RAM

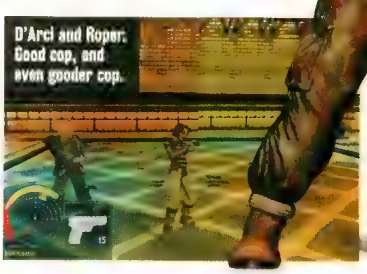
Contact: www.urbanchaos.com, or www muckyfoot.com

Release Date: December

What's in it for you: Go-anywhere, do-anything action adventure, that's part beat-'em-up, part third-person shooter, and part thinking man's strategy.

PRETTY leaves and plenty of rain. That's what stood out the most when we first glimpsed *Urban Chaos* way back in PCG 59. Granted, it was more of a technology demo than a game back then, but it's incredible to think that a highly atmospheric near-future cityscape teeming with life has now evolved from such inauspicious beginnings.

The *Urban Chaos* of October 99 is an almost complete 3D adventure set on the mean streets of a filthy sprawl called Union City. A beautifully rendered (BAFTA-nominated) intro sets the scene: two typically hard-boiled cops, D'Arci and Roper, fight a constant war against armed gangs, blah, blah, blah. While the story-line and concept are fairly unlikely to win too many originality awards, the game itself may come close.



"WE'LL BE FIGHTING OVER THE REVIEW COPY WHEN IT ARRIVES..."

Taking control of either cop (individual missions dictate which), you're able to jog, sprint, kick, punch, crawl and climb your way around the city areas in true Batman style. Pedestrians pace the streets, cars roll by, and hookers and muggers do their nefarious business down dark alleys and in the undergrowth of parks. Without doubt, *Urban Chaos's* biggest victory is its successful simulation of an inner city milieu - warts and all.

Beginning at the city's cop shop, you're quickly informed of your mission objectives – a process that instantly highlights arrows on your city map plan. Truth be told, you'll probably spend as much time looking at your map as you will the game screen; the city is a huge place, and as you're often up against a strict time limit, it's prudent to head

Once they're floored you can choose to handcuff them, or simply put the boot in.

The thug's levels are particularly entertaining.

n the right d rect on from the off Once you've found your target (wh ch can be anyth ng from a granny-mugging thug, to a sto en car gang HQ, or sur dal shopper), you then have to decide the best course of act on to take The spec al moves of your character mean you can attempt to punch and k ck the perpetrators to death with an inventory allowing you to se ect auto-aiming weapons as wel

However, you could ditch the T, Hooker approach a together and try to s mply arrest them A few punches shou d get them on the ground, from where you can lean over their prone bod es and force the cuffs on, that done, you can even search them for useful items

TAXI DRIVER

Travis Bickle would be proud. For as well as 'washing all the scum off the streets', the game's first mission sees D'Arci turn taxi driver. A seemingly innocuous road traffic accident has you sent to recover the trashed vehicle, only to get embroiled in a nasty mugging incident en route. The offender safely cuffed, but it's then that you realise the only way to return the cab to the station is by driving it yourself. Watch the innocent pedestrians, pause for zebra crossings, and make sure you don't cause another RTA on the way back.

Car crash.

District Station.

ts features like these as wel as the abi ity to cl mb onto rooftops swing down cables dr ve cars (see 'Taxi Dr.ver'), and talk to *anyone* that you meet that makes *Urban Chaos* a p easure to p ay It offers an e ement of freedom that's absent from the majority of other s mi ar games It s for that reason alone, that we shal be fighting over the review copy when it arrives PCG

Brief game-engine cut-scenes pop up to tell the story.

TALKING IN CODE

Michael Diskett, *Urban Chaos* programmer, talk to PC GAMER

PCG: In 20 words, why should we be excited about *Urban Chaos*?

Because it combines fighting/driving/platforming/shooting/action/adventure

PCG: What's the one feature you're happiest with so far?

The hand-to-hand combat against multiple adversaries Dropping off a rooftop onto a mugger, knocking him out, then doing a backwards kick on his mate.

PCG: Which games have been your inspiration?

Syndicate Wars, Street Fighter in all its forms, Mario 64, Driver, Zelda 64, Outcast.

PCG: What kind of person will buy your game?

Anyone who fancies a change from the endless supply of first-person shooters out there Anyone who likes games with more depth.

game

GTa2

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DARK REIGN 2

Tiberian Sun's looking nervously over its shoulder.

By MARK DONALD

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We've previously snatched glimpses of *Dark Reign 2* via Eyewitness accounts in PCGs 61, 65 and 67.

Units range from tiny foot soldiers to enormous mechs.

(Inset) Level of detail increases the further you zoom in.

DARK REIGN 2 AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Activision

Developer: Pandemic Studios

Genre: Real-time strategy

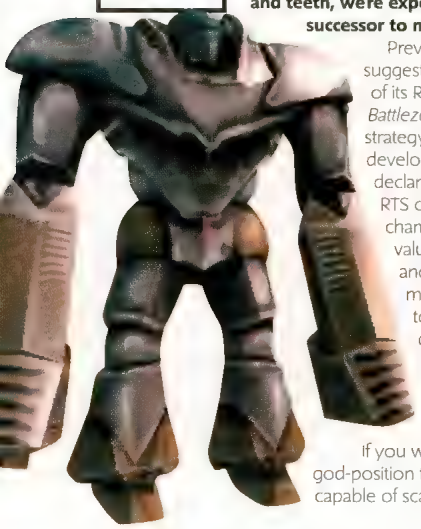
Estimated Minimum System: PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 3D card

Contact: www.activision.com

Release Date: Spring 2000

What's in it for you: Luscious 3D graphics plus a fanatical commitment to resource management and base building can only mean a traditional RTS game pumped-up into glorious 3D relief.

THE evolution of real-time strategy games is currently the subject of a fierce Darwinian competition. From the original isometric ancestor, the genre is expanding to fill every available niche. *Warcraft III* is melding with role-playing; Westwood is flirting with 3D action and *Homeworld* exists in a vacuum. But, like the wobble of protoplasm that first turned up in the gene pool sporting a backbone and teeth, we're expecting *Dark Reign's* successor to make a big splash.



Previous sightings of *DR2* suggested an abandonment of its RTS roots in favour of *Battlezone*-style action-strategy. Recently, though, developers Pandemic declared themselves for the RTS camp. *DR2* is to be a champion of traditional values, with base building and resource management as integral to the game as combat. Essentially, it will play like the original *Dark Reign* with the added fillip of the 3D camera

If you want to play from the god-position then the engine is capable of scaling the graphics to cope with the bigger picture – zooming out so you can quickly assess the entire battle and direct squads to where they're needed most. You can play the whole game like this if you want but Pandemic are committed to giving you plenty of reasons to zoom in to examine the visual extravagance of the 3D environments. In the past, many RTS games haven't known what to do with their 3D terrain. *(Machines* comes to mind) rendering their close-range views redundant

The plan for *DR2* is to create rich level-scapes full of tactical subtleties and ambush opportunities that will encourage you to zoom in to spy the lie of the land. As well as the standard scramble for high ground, you'll be able to hide troops in trees and submerge them in swamps. From the god view you're too remote to spot such traps, so you'll have to zoom in to find them.

Concrete details about unit types and abilities are greyed out right now, but we do

SCALING THE HEIGHTS

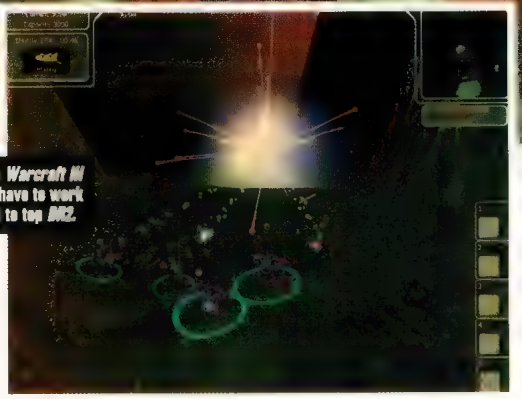
DR2 will stand or fall on the graphic engine's ability to deliver stunning visuals at close range while coping smoothly with continuous changes in perspective when the player wants to pull back. For this task Pandemic are deploying Intel's Multi-Resolution Mesh (MRM) technology. This allows the engine to dynamically scale each individual model according to how many polygons are on-screen at once. So, while infantry units are knitted from a polygon skin of 1200 triangles at their peak, they can be scaled back to 30 polygons or less when the camera moves out to show stacks of units engaged in a huge firefight.

Previously, PCs scaled the action by keeping several levels of detail in memory. As the perspective changed they'd load in the next level causing obvious popping as models jumped from, say, 30 polygons per man to 100.

MRM, however, can scale models by a single polygon at a time as the camera zooms. It shaves off triangles by analysing a model's mesh and deciding which vertices are least important at each level of detail.

Epic battles can be fought from long distance or from a much more attractive close-up.

War's less confusing, thanks to the unit markers.



Even *Warcraft III* will have to work hard to top *DR2*.

"YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HIDE TROOPS IN TREES AND SUBMERGE THEM IN SWAMPS."

know there will be 30 individual units split between two sides known as the Jovian Detention Authority (JDA) and the Sprawlers As is the fashion, the sequel occurs at some point in the original's past. The Earth has been nuked one time too many, leading to civilisation's collapse, etc

The JDA represent the technologically advanced vestiges of society while the Sprawlers seem to be inter planetary crusties who've dropped out of the tax system and spend their entire time begging the JDA for spare change or, failing that, a fag. War is inevitable. And thank god, because as well as some tasty looking infantry both sides can access hover, air and water-borne vehicles on top of lovely tanks

The twist, though, is that some units will specialise in nocturnal operations to take advantage of *DR2's* day/night cycle. This has been done before to little effect, and it remains to be seen what Pandemic will make of it. All they'll reveal for now is that some units won't be able to perform certain functions at night (like seeing very far ahead). However, we can certainly confirm they look good when the sun goes down, what with their battlesuit lamps flaring up and their laser sights 'painting' targets.

If nothing else, such graphical bounty helps brew up an atmosphere. *Hidden And Dangerous* was great because it generated incredible tension and, happily, Pandemic are also keen to put you in the mood. To this end they'll use the in-game engine to create cut-scenes to integrate with the action like *Half-Life's*. Briefings and debriefings will also occur in the 3D world in a bid to cover up those irksome gaming seams.

The one downside to all this is that we won't be able to hand over any cash for it until deep into next year. Damn these good-looking games, they take so long. PCG

IF ACTION HAS A NAME, IT MUST BE INDIANA JONES

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PURE INDY PURE ACTION

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PHARAOH

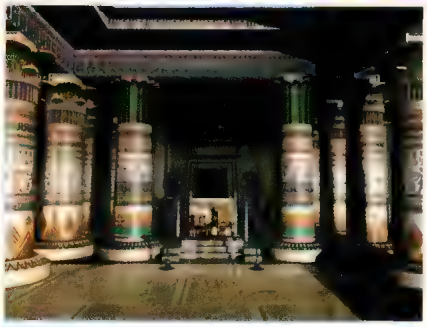
After a trilogy of Caesars, Impressions turn their attention to ancient Egypt, with monumental results.

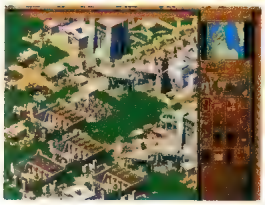
By ROSS ATHERTON

Temples can be augmented after the basic structure has been completed.

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We first dug up *Pharaoh* back in PCG 69's Eyewitness section.

Wondering where all the workers come from? They're farmers, unemployed during the flood.

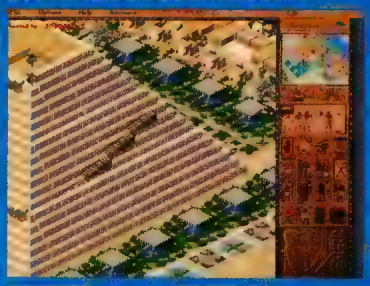




It's a labour-intensive business.

THE MILLENNIUM PYRAMID

We aren't the only ones who build enormous, pointless monuments. Of course, it took the Egyptians dozens – sometimes almost 100 – years to build the larger pyramids, and this is reflected in *Pharaoh*. Having closely studied archeological theories about how the pyramids were constructed, Impressions have beautifully recreated the process including dinky little ramps, blocks of stone and lots of little workers.



A pyramid like this can take scores of years to build – and that's assuming you have a good supply of materials. Blocks are painstakingly pushed up the ramps by your workers.

Can you tell what it is yet? You can build Sphinxes, which are gradually carved from massive blocks of stone by your craftsmen. Needless to say, this takes a long time too.

PHARAOH AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Sierra

Developer: Impressions

Genre: Strategy

Estimated Minimum System: P166, 32Mb RAM

Contact: www.pharaoh1.com

Release Date: Christmas

What's in it for you: City-building featuring over 2,200 years of pre-Roman history, featuring the biggest buildings ever!

ON THE CD

TWO thousand, two hundred years. It's hard to think of many games that have accurately modelled the passage of such a mind-boggling period of time. And while many comparisons will be drawn between *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* (PCG 63, 87%), which was Impressions' previous game, the latter game did little to reflect the passage of time during Roman civilisation.

Transplanting the city-building ethos of *Caesar III* to ancient Egypt has presented Impressions with all manner of challenges Egypt's system of dynasties, a complex social structure, all-encompassing religion, the seasonal flooding of the Nile and, of course, military action against neighbours present a wealth of opportunities

Of course, city-building always suffer from being slightly aimless. How many players of the *SimCity* games have never wished for some kind of tangible goal? Fortunately, *Pharaoh* is divided into three dynasties, and each scenario demands that you harness available resources to construct fantastic monuments such as the pyramids. Meanwhile, you'll also have to manage your economy, agriculture and military concerns; agriculture in particular has taken an intriguing turn since the *Caesar* games.

Historically, the Nile has always been Egypt's life blood. Flooding every year, the water deposits rich and fertile mud over carefully built farmland, making areas adjacent to the river among the most fertile in the world. This is reflected in the game, meaning you must take advantage of the floods, build farms in the right places, and irrigate where necessary. The gods also play an important part, and can be consulted to find out if the floods will be high or low.

"YOU'LL ACTUALLY SEE THE FLOOD IN PROGRESS, AND YOU'LL NEED TO BE PREPARED."

The three campaigns (corresponding to the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms) pose distinct challenges. The Old Kingdom, when Egypt had little contact with the outside world, saw the greatest pyramids. The later campaigns introduce warfare, new technologies and increased trade

It looks much more than *Caesar III* with pyramids. We'll bring you the definitive review around Christmas.

AS REAL AS IT GETS

Rainbow Six is back... and tougher than ever. Due to the team's fantastic success with defusing major terrorist incidents, the international community has come to depend on RAINBOW as the main force secretly protecting citizens world-wide. The story continues in Rogue Spear with the team's initial missions being business as usual; a hostage situation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and an airplane hijacking. RAINBOW uncovers the terrorists' deadly master plan, just in the nick of time to save the world again.

Features

- TERRORISTS LOOK REALISTIC AND LETHAL THAN EVER
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PC CD

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TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE

www.take2games.com

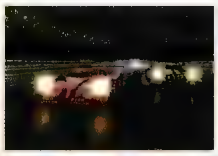
LE MANS 24 HOURS

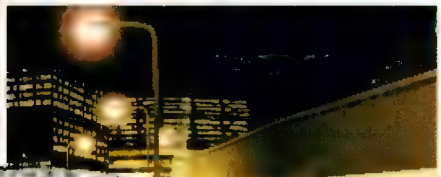
There's an option to play it in real-time, you know...

By JAMES ASHTON

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We uncovered news of *Le Mans'* development back in PCG 67, then followed up with a Scoop in PCG 69.

The full range of camera options is available in the replays.





Headlights are essential as day turns to night. There's little track lighting to help you, either.

BURN RUBBER

True to its real-life counterpart, tyres play a big part in *Le Mans 24 Hours*. Hold the throttle down at the start and your car is as likely to crab sideways as it is to go forward as your excess horsepower burns off the first two millimeters of rubber in a frantic, smoking wheelspin. You'd be advised to avoid it, though, as a tyre monitor in the bottom left of the screen keeps strict track of your boots' traction capability. Burn too much and you'll find yourself requiring a costly early pit stop.

LE MANS AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Infogrames

Developer: Eutechnyx

Estimated Minimum System: P200, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo 2

Contact: www.eutechnyx.com

Release Date: November 26th

What's in it for you: The only officially licensed version of the world-famous 24 hour race. Arcade and simulation modes ramp up the variety and you can – if you're bonkers – play the whole thing in real time.

THE Le Mans 24 Hour race rarely receives the televisual coverage we feel it deserves. This year, it took the amusing (yet rather terrifying) sight of two airborne Mercedes supercars to get one of the world's most historic races onto our screens. Infogrames and Newcastle-based developer Eutechnyx are hoping that dramatic design failures won't be the reason their game attracts attention in late November.

All the cars are race-genuine.

"ENTER INTO THE WHOLE FUEL/WEIGHT/DOWNFORCE STRATEGY ESSENTIAL TO THE EVENT."

Of course, if true simulation is your aim then a 24-hour race presents quite a challenge for a computer game. There is the option to play the race in real time – with game pauses and saves available for those suffering the human frailties of lavatory and food breaks – but a whole host of other options make the very best of a tricky situation. Along with the real Le Mans course – a petrolhead's heaven of long straights and challenging high-speed corners – there are eight similarly-themed shorter tracks to race in arcade mode.

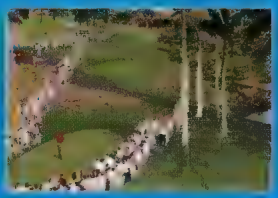
For more cerebral PC gamers, however, the game's biggest draw will almost certainly be the chance to enter into the whole fuel/weight/downforce/pitstops strategy so essential in a day-long event. A time-acceleration feature compresses the 24 hours of the race into the manageable time frame of your choice. Daylight changes slowly to dusk and then to night as you race, and the careful in-race management of your car's resources becomes crucial; as your headlights pick out only 100 meters or so of the moonlight-bathed track ahead. Set you rev-limiter high for better straight-line speeds but risk an engine failure, or play it safe and calculate a better pit stop strategy – the choice is yours.

The version we played of *Le Mans* was largely complete and waiting to go into testing to balance out the abilities of the CPU cars. With all the teams, cars and sponsors of the real race, and a nifty career-progression feature, *Le Mans* will be an interesting – and unique – prospect when it arrives for review next month.

"Reschedule my meetings - I'm on a training course"

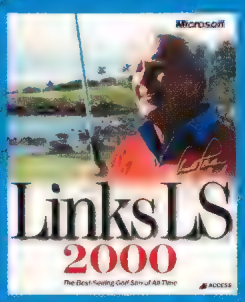
With the unsurpassed detail in Microsoft® Links™ LS 2000, you can play alongside Arnold Palmer on 6 legendary golf courses, including St. Andrews Old Course. Customise your game to suit every style of play and with the new one click swing, it's now easy to choose a game play option that suits your skill level.

Tee off from six incredibly detailed courses.



Experience the reality of true-to-life tournament crowds.

Experiment with three different types of swing.



Tee off at www.microsoft.com/uk/games/

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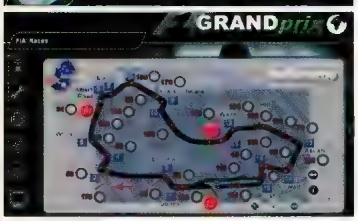
GRAND PRIX WORLD

If you find the qualifying and press conference as exciting as the race, you're in luck... **By MATTHEW PIERCE**

PREVIOUSLY ON... << Nowt. This is *Grand Prix World's* debut within PC GAMER's pages.

The individually animated cars sit well on the photo-realistic tracks.



Formula 1 Stattos are going to lap it up.

GRAND PRIX WORLD AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Hasbro

Developer: Edward Grabowski Comms

Genre: Management

Estimated Minimum System: P200, 32Mb RAM, 3D card.

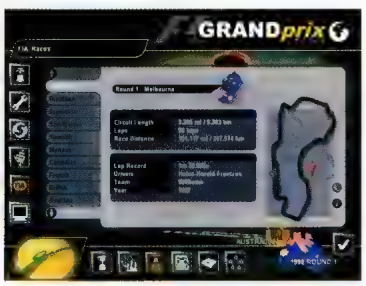
Contact: www.hasbro.com

Release Date: November

What's in it for you: An alternative take on everyone's favourite motor sport. In *GP World* you get to manage ten seasons of F1 racing.

ALTHOUGH we're looking forward to Geoff Crammond's *F1 Grand Prix 3* more than mere words can relate, there are certain areas of the sport that not even He will attempt to simulate. Enter *Grand Prix World* – a pseudo-sequel to the ancient *Grand Prix Manager* games – which aims to realistically reproduce every aspect of a Formula 1 season.

By placing you in the role of 'team manager', you are directly able to exert your influence upon every part of your team's strategy. From technical decisions such as deciding on pit stop strategies and tyres, to completing sponsorship deals and even determining the level of hospitality that your guests receive, your team's success both on the track and in the boardroom is your responsibility.



FOUR PLAY

Come race day, each of the four separate game windows can be manipulated in *Grand Prix World* to show multiple views of the racetrack – allowing you to watch your own drivers, TV presentation, or even best lap times and pit-stop statistics. Thankfully, you don't need to watch the whole race in real time either; it lets you speed the proceedings up as much as you want or just view selected highlights instead.

"AS TEAM MANAGER, YOU ARE ABLE TO EXERT YOUR INFLUENCE ON YOUR TEAM'S STRATEGY."

Simulating no less than ten full seasons of the big money sport (beginning in '98), *GP World* allows you to choose any team to manage, and from there on in gives you the opportunity to stamp your authority on the whole outfit. Every member of staff, including big-name drivers, can be swapped, bought, sold or poached from your rivals, and you can even manipulate their wages in a bid to keep them happy – or force them to leave.

Hasbro have also done away with commentary, replacing it with pit to car speech that gives you a better feeling of how your drivers are faring, and consequently if they are having technical problems. Pre-race, you can even order your drivers to adopt dirty tactics – persuading them to take out a rival team's racers, or at the very least, illustrate how much room they should need before attempting a risky overtaking manoeuvre.

With all 16 tracks to race on, as well as all the familiar drivers, cars and teams, *Grand Prix World* is nothing if not exhaustive. Whether it's going to succeed in the competition for your attention among all the forthcoming traditional F1 sims is uncertain. However, in the specialist niche that it inhabits, its supremacy is assured

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SITE FOR www.pcgamer.co.uk SORE EYES

"DEAR PC GAMER, WHY OH WHY OH WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A WEB SITE? EH? ANSWER ME, DAMN YOU!" CEASE YOUR WHINING; WE'RE ABOUT TO GIVE YOU EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE BEEN ASKING FOR.

WE'RE sure that at some point, every single one of you with Internet access has typed 'www.pcgamer.co.uk' into your Web browser to see what happens. Well... yeah. We know. Hardly an exciting on-line presence for the most exciting PC gaming mag in the world, is it? Which is why we've been beavering away behind the scenes for the past few months to make that www.pcgamer.co.uk address point to something worth looking at. Assuming our calculations are correct, it should now be well worth paying a visit; we now have a Web site, and it's a corker even if we do say so ourselves.

The man in charge of our new venture into the electric world of the Internet is PC GAMER's new On-line Editor, Jim McCauley. An Internet addict before most people had even heard of the Internet, Jim has been drafted in from sister mag PC Format in order to give our Web site the best possible start. After making his home in a dark corner and garnering himself a reputation as the source of some of the worst and scariest music ever to befoul the PCG office, he and his colleagues at Future On-line have set to work on making a Web site to be proud of.

"A searchable database of PC GAMER reviews and tips."

The first thing you'll see is the latest PC gaming news. Jim lives and breathes gaming this stuff, and believes that a truly mighty gaming site must revolve around a core of the purest, freshest news. Updated twice a day from sources all over the world, www.pcgamer.co.uk aims to report the latest and most important PC gaming developments as soon as they happen. If John Romero sneezes, you'll know about it before he's had a chance to wipe the resultant viscous mess from his monitor.

There's more to the site than that, though. As well as providing the up-to-datest news, Jim has committed himself to sorting you out with a daily dose of crunchy content with The Packed Lunch. Appearing every weekday at, funnily enough, lunchtime, The Packed Lunch is a crammed section of top-hole feature content that'll brighten up your lunch hour, give you something to amuse yourself with during one of those quiet patches during the afternoon, or provide you with a damn good reason to rush home and get on-line at the end of the day.

As to exactly what you'll find in The Packed Lunch, its quasi-anarchistic nature makes it impossible to predict *(Does he actually know yet? - Ed)*. But it'll make you laugh. It'll make you slap your brow in amazement. It'll make you leave a sticky note on your PC reminding you to come back again tomorrow.

PC GAMER

www.pcgamer.co.uk

"The Original... ...and Best"

Could there possibly be more than that? Ah, but of course there could. How about a searchable database of every single review and tip that's appeared in PC GAMER over the years? Ha. Easy. It's there and waiting for you to probe it, with a frighteningly cunning system that

"Interviews with the greats of the gaming world – with *your* questions."

enables you switch between reviews, previews and tips for any particular game by simply clicking one little tab.

Okay, what about previews and screen shots of the latest games, the same day as we've first seen them in the PCG office? Piece of cake, mate. Interviews with the great and good of the gaming world, where *you* get to ask the questions? Sorted.

All right, then. What about stunning downloads that you just can't get anywhere else? Exclusive demos, gorgeous Windows wallpaper, the best mods and patches for your favourite games. That sort of thing? We're way ahead of you; so far ahead that we're going to mention amazing competitions with prizes so

hot that they have to be kept in a special supercooled vault. Yes, all of that's there. Take a look, grab what you fancy and don't forget to enter the competitions.

Still there's more: we have a section devoted to on-line gaming in many flavours, courtesy of our friends at Wireplay, and should our extensive on-line coverage whet your appetite for any particular game, we'll even provide the means for you to purchase it. How's that for service?

Have we forgotten anything? Well, if we have then there's plenty of room for you to let us know about it. The Uncensored section gives you the opportunity to vent your spleen, speak your brains and give us a piece of your mind. We have a forum, plenty of room for your own reviews and your favourite screenshots, and if that's not enough then we don't know what is. You might know what it is though, so let Jim know and he'll see what he can do. Feel free to fire him off an e-mail with your thoughts: jim.mccauley@futurenet.co.uk

What, you've forgotten the URL already? Here it is again, then: www.pcgamer.co.uk. Use it wisely. We'd advise you to visit the site straight away and then bookmark the front page. It'll save you having to remember the URL, and it'll also prevent unnecessary wear and tear on your keyboard and fingers. Ooh, and don't forget to tell all your friends about the site and come back as often as you like.

INTERVIEW

Not every industry supremo wears a suit. This 28 year-old Londoner used to make videos for BMG, hold club nights at Ronnie Scott's in Soho, and party with pop stars. All this before crossing the Atlantic to set up Take 2's brand-new Rockstar games division.

SAM HOUSER

BY OWAIN BENNALLACK

What's the weather like in New York?
We've just had a hurricane, as it happens. It was officially a state of emergency. Because we're English, as far as we could tell it was just a bit of rain.

How are you finding the Americans?
Well, the difference with English journalists is that they 'get' it. We're all young guys, into our games and culture. Here it's all graphics cards and polygon performance. That's like talking about what film stock you shot a movie on.

What is your focus, then, at Rockstar?
It's easy to think that, now we've done *GTA*, we've got to do games about serial killers, taking cocaine and shooting heroin, but that's not where it's going. It sounds whimsical, but we're going to publish games we like. It's gonna to start with gameplay.

Rockstar won't be the video nasty games label?
No, but it won't be games about the Rolling Stones either. That said, there's nothing better to turn heads then a bit of controversy. You have to combine it with good gameplay. An example where that wasn't the case was *Postal*. A guy goes nuts and goes out to kill everyone. Not a bad hook, but they decided to marry it with no gameplay whatsoever.

How would you define good gameplay?
For me, it's got to be something original. It's got to feel like something you haven't done before. It's something DMA do really really well. It's also got to be something that when you've left it, and later you're at having your dinner or watching TV, - you're still thinking about something to do with the game.

Obviously, *GTA2* is difficult because when people played the first *GTA*, they hadn't played anything like it. We've had to work hard to make sure you get these fresh new moments, which I believe you do get when gangs suddenly turn on you or support you, or shoot cops for you. I just love all that. As Gary Penn at DMA would describe it, 'it's a great big toyset'.

Do you have a favourite car?
Yeah, the Yakuza gang vehicle.

What weapon are you carrying?
The silenced Uzi. For me, it's the *only* one. All the characters have line of sight now so you can go up behind them and you shoot them and they don't even know you're there. There are guys here who are experts with the Molotov cocktails, which are a whole lot of fun in the right hands.

How do you stay focused?
My partner here is Terry Donovan, the son of the late Terence Donovan, the photographer. His dad once told me that when you're doing something creative, like a photo shoot or writing a book or making a game, you've got to have *one* great idea. You've got to have some single thing that gives it a proper reason for existing.

And that's enough to keep you focused?
Yeah. I don't want to sound like an a***hole, but I think that too many games - and too many journalists seem to focus on technology instead. The films that have stood the test of time have great stories, great content. The films of generations of youth are still those Scorcese films. I watched Raging Bull again the other day start to finish. Cinematically, it's a good-looking film but it isn't Stargate or Terminator 2. It's a great story presented brilliantly and you want to come back to it and see it again and again.

It's so much easier to attract people with good graphics though - it must be tempting to concentrate on that?
Gameplay is the most difficult thing to market, because it's so intangible. That's why we like to combine great gameplay with some sort of marketable commercial edge. The controversial element attracted people to *GTA*, but it wasn't the actual thing that sold it.

If we could replicate that formula, we would. However, we're not going to come out with the *GTA* series *Mass Murderer* where you play Ted Bundy and go around and killing everyone. We're not going to shaft people with crap.

What is officially in the works at Rockstar?
GTA2 on the PC and PlayStation and *Thrasher* on the PlayStation. Then we're going to focus on PlayStation 2. I'm a big believer in this convergence theory. Sony wants to own your living room. They have done so for 20 years, but they've made you

Peter Fonda, doing a great job of impersonating Sam Houser.

"*GTA* had become kind of sexy and cool, and people weren't scared about talking about it in the pub. It's not so geeky, it's real and people should be proud."

[redacted]

buy so many boxes - the video player, the TV, the stereo, the PlayStation - that your front room has got a little messy! PlayStation 2 - one machine, one focus, 'boom boom boom'. We'll be getting titles straight out of the gate at its launch.

Will any end of those up on PC?
Yeah, but basically I think there is an inherent difference in what makes a good console game and what makes a good PC game. *GTA* is one of those rare exceptions.

Is the writing on the wall for PC games?
No, I don't think so. Many people have a PC and a console. Will I be able to play *Unreal Tournament* through a PlayStation 2? I think a keyboard and a mouse is still the way to play those games. Conversely, I've never been a fan of playing sports games on the PC.

What about the rumoured Microsoft console, X-Box?
It has potential but I've a few questions. They're talking about publishers not having to pay royalty. It sounds cool but it means that anyone can put out anything and you end up with the mess on the shelves that is PC titles. It sounds insane to say I want to pay Sony money, but it means you've actually got to make some effort.

Also, the big PC games to move over are the first-person shooters, which work well with a keyboard and a mouse. Is this console going to have a keyboard and a mouse, at which point you ask is it one thing or the other?

There is even talk of it being upgradeable.
Well, I suppose to the console crowd that's the Holy Grail. Upgrading scares the hell out of me, and I wouldn't bother. I just buy a new PC because I can't upgrade mine. I'm a half-wit. I can't go adding RAM. Uh-oh, I've just wiped the hard disk!

What games have you been playing recently?
I've been playing *Everquest* a lot. I think it's the best on line one to date. But it's still only going to work with a certain audience.

Could you take the Rockstar way to a massive multi-player audience?
I'd love to. We've got a bunch of concepts, one of which wouldn't take much guessing...

Could it be *GTA* in a huge on-line city?
[Laughs] I'm not going to comment! The big problem for me with on-line gaming is personality. It's like playing with computer characters because I don't know anyone. In *Blood* I used to love to cap someone with the flare gun. It would be so funny because it was your friend over the corridor. It's like conkers, you're just shoving it down their throats and it's all in good fun. No-one's going to pull a gun out and shoot the other

Any other games you've been playing?
This PC game we actually licensed from a developer in Hungary to the Game Boy, called *Action Supercross*. Gary Penn at DMA gave it to me a year ago. You just steer a bike through these little 2D courses. The feel of the bike is un-f***ing-believable. We've got the Evil Knievel license and we put the two together.

Do you look outside for all your titles?
No, we have one internal Rockstar studio in Canada. They developed *GTA London*. I think the split will be 40 percent internal, 60 percent external. You've got to have internal to have that knowledge in-house, but you've got to work with externals to keep everything fresh.

Your parent company Take Two created a pretty poor name for itself with games like *Lula: Virtual Babe*. Isn't Rockstar just a cynical way of shaking off a bad reputation?
What happened was *GTA* had become kind of sexy and cool and people weren't scared about talking about it in the pub. And, before leaving England, we launched *Three Lions*. Whether it was good, bad or indifferent, we threw the best f***ing party the games business has ever seen. Sanjay from EastEnders and Jane Middlemiss were banging on the window screaming to get in. I thought, it's not so geeky, it's not just for d***heads. it's actually real and people should be proud.

So Rockstar isn't hiding the fact that it's a games company?
No, it's promoting the fact. Even if you don't like the name Rockstar, it's glamorous but slightly tongue in cheek. No-one takes themselves too seriously around here. Imagine working at Apple records when the Beatles were on fire.

Obviously Take Two has, in its own way, evolved over the last 12 months. It's got a lot more content and it's stopped releasing those shit titles you referred to. You can see that in stuff like *Hidden And Dangerous*.

Some people seem in awe of your music business roots.
They f***ing well shouldn't be. The games business is like motion pictures when people first turned on the sound. Currently, the music business is stagnant. There are some great people in the industry but they are stifled by monolithic companies. I was in BMG telling people about MP3 - they'd tell me to shut up.

Technology has overtaken them now.
Exactly, they are too big to respond and reflect. Our business isn't like that. I like hip-hop, and basically all my favourite hip-hop tracks are now in a game. We can incorporate anything we like into these things because they are, in the true sense of the word, multimedia.

Do you think games could come to replace movies and music?
It's an interesting one. When I was seven or eight years old, I was listening to David Bowie and Adam and the Ants and that was what I lived for. Now, when you hear kids talk, it's games.

But when you get depressed at 17 you still start listening to The Smiths. I don't think games are doing that yet.
No, but there are games out there that generate feelings or responses. It's a question of moving up the emotions. I'm not saying a game can replace The Smiths records. You're 16, you're depressed, your parents don't understand you...

What would the definitive Rockstar game be?
Two of my heroes from the movies are Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer. They started with Top Gun and then they made ConAir and The Rock. We'd be good at trying to be those guys meets John Woo. That level of insane production along with the style and precision of John Woo is exactly what I'm looking for.

Necessarily violent?
I like action. If at the end of the day it turns out to be violent, it's violent. I'm just wondering if I'll get to somersault through the air with two guns firing!

I want you be able to dive over a load of people eating Dim Sum, in a restaurant in New York City. I want a double handed glock, and shooting to the side. Make it amazing to play, great looking, great fun, cinematic, great girls, the whole thing!

For me, the game that we're involved with at the moment that is actually headed in that direction is *Max Payne*. Of course, we're the owners of the *Grand Theft Auto* series and it's not impossible that *GTA* could become all of those things itself. PCG

MONEY MEN

The Power and the Passion

■ While game developers have always been much like their audience, those with publishing power typically haven't cared for games. From the fast-buck cowboys of the '80's who made a fortune selling cheap Speccy tapes, to the media companies buying into games in the '90's, the suits have seen games as a messy business that someone has to do.

But Sam Houser is just one emerging mogul who grew up, like most of us, playing first Atari then console or Spectrum or Amiga games, never realising he was supposed to pull the plug. Other powerful players include VIS Interactive's Krys van der Kuyl, Elixir Studios' Demis Hassabis and even Eidos' chairman Ian Livingstone. Long may their Armani suits bulge with half-inched games they want to sneak out of the office to have a go on at home.

NEXT MONTH

Louis Castle of Westwood, talking *C&C: Renegade*.

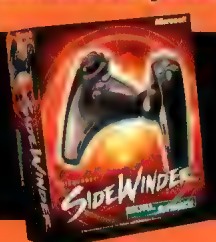
Microsoft SideWinder

Jumpcrouchstepleft aimfire.

A gaming device that combines the precision and control of a mouse with the agility and speed of a gamepad. An ingenious, easy-to-use piece of hardware that takes you right inside your favourite characters, making you more versatile, more agile and more deadly. The right hand rotating pod controls looking, aiming and firing, while the left hand controls agility movements such as running, dodging and side stepping. It's called Microsoft® SideWinder® Dual Strike. And it's time you got your hands on one.

Play to win.

Enhance your performance at www.microsoft.com/uk/games/



TOMB RAIDER
THE LAST REVELATION

Coming Soon!

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Microsoft®

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PC GAMER

REVIEWS

In which we put every new game in front of our panel of experts.

HOW OUR REVIEWS WORK

1. We only review finished games. Our preference is for boxed copies, but on occasion we are forced to review from pre-production gold master discs. In this latter case, we will only review games that have been signed off as finished by their publisher.

2. We play every game for at least two or three days before starting to write. If we think a game might be worthy of 85% or more, then we will endeavour to finish it before writing our review.

3. We match games to reviewers very carefully. Only a real-time strategy expert will review a real-time strategy game, for example, and only those with a passion for first-person shooters will get their hands on the next instalment of *Quake* or the next *Half-Life*. When you read a PC GAMER review you can be certain that the writer is an expert in his field and has plenty of enthusiasm for the type of game he's writing about.

4. The scores we award games are based on the PC GAMER scoring system (above-right) and no other. You can trust that the scores we give will accurately reflect this system. If a game earns the Game of Distinction or Game of the Month awards, you can be certain it will make an excellent purchase.

5. We review every game according to its merits. If it's a multi-player-only wargame, and won't work with anything less than a Voodoo3, then we'll judge its performance on that criteria. However, our reviews will also give you plenty of warning if a game has any special requirements and will also give you a good idea of how well a game will perform on your PC. Our benchmark PC is a PII 350, 64Mb RAM, with a Voodoo2 graphics accelerator card. However, after initial play-testing, we will then play the game on or near the minimum specification machine stated by the game's publisher and judge how well it performs. We will also test the machine on a more 'average' PC and report its performance on that. See the System Miser box to the right.

6. Our reviewers are real gamers who write with other gamers in mind. Our sole aim is to tell you whether or not a game is worth playing, and no amount of coercion or pressure from anyone will prevent us giving you the honest truth.

RIGHT TO REPLY

Think we've treated a game unfairly? Over-rated something you found a bit average? Address your redress to pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk or write to James Ashton, Cables, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or post a review to our 'Uncensored' section on page 121.

THE PC GAMER SCORING SYSTEM

These are the only criteria by which PC GAMER awards its scores.

0-10%

Not just bad, games in this category simply fail to work in an acceptable way. Games that score this low are either unplayable or lack enough content to actually qualify as a 'game'. If you see them, alert the authorities.

RECENT EXAMPLES

South Park PCG 69
Star Trek: Starship Creator PCG 74

11-29%

It's not just that the game is badly executed, it's more that the whole concept was never a very good idea in the first place. There is at least a game here but it's ill-conceived and shoddily produced. Avoid at all costs.

RECENT EXAMPLES

NASCAR Road Racing PCG 74
Rage Of Mages PCG 65

30-49%

There's probably the germ of a good idea in here somewhere, but lots of things have gone badly wrong along the way. Not unplayably bad, but obvious and significant flaws seriously reduce the possibility of sustained fun.

RECENT EXAMPLES

Puma Street Soccer PCG 71
Deo Gratias PCG 66

50-69%

A score for games that suffer no major problems but somehow fail to be more than the sum of their parts. A few niggles may annoy, but big fans of the genre in question will get some entertainment here. The less committed won't be so interested.

RECENT EXAMPLES

Descent 3 PCG 72
Expendable PCG 7

70-84%

Any game that scores more than 70% in PC GAMER will be capable of entertaining almost anyone that picks it up and is a title that no-one should be embarrassed to own. These games lack the individual spark of greatness, but they're lots of fun all the same.

RECENT EXAMPLES

Star Wars: The Phantom Menace PCG 71
Discworld Noir PCG 72 74

85%+

Games that score more than 85% can be unequivocally recommended and as a result, earn themselves our Game of Distinction award. Only games that actually redefine what can be expected from the genre in future will score 90% or more.

RECENT EXAMPLES

Hidden And Dangerous PC 71
Unreal Tournament PCG 74

THE PC GAMER GAME OF DISTINCTION AWARD

The Game of Distinction Award is given to any game that scores 85% or more. When you see this award you can guarantee that the game in question is a true classic and well worth your money. We think hard before giving the award, usually playing the game in question right to the end before making our final judgement. This way we can be sure that it remains top-notch all the way through.

THE PC GAMER GAME OF THE MONTH AWARD

The Game of the Month award is our ultimate accolade. If you can only buy one game this month then it should be the one emblazoned with this badge. This game is one of the all-time greats, and should appeal to everyone right across the board. We don't give out this award automatically. If, in a month, there aren't any games that measure up to those standards, then we won't make the award.

SYSTEM MISER

All games are first played under the best possible conditions on our benchmark review PCs, which are PII 350s with 64Mb RAM and a Voodoo2 card. But you need to know if a game works on your PC at home. So, providing we think a game is good enough to score 80% or more, we test it on some more 'real life' machines to see how it performs with less processor power at its disposal.

Our aim is to try to give you a good idea of how well the game will play (and what it will look like) on your PC, as well as testing the reliability of the minimum specification stated by the game's publisher. After that, we'll take a more middle of the road set-up and examine how the game performs on that. Then we report our findings in the 'System Miser' box accompanying every game that scores over 80%.

SYSTEM MISER – An example

How *Generic Shooter 3* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card installed**

VERDICT: How well does the game run at minimum spec? We'll tell you right here and include the screen resolution above.

■ Test System **P266, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb)**

VERDICT: How well does the game run on medium spec machines? Find out here, again with the resolution above.

THE PC GAMER REVIEWERS

Our reviewers are experts in their field with many years of gaming experience behind them. They are hand-picked for their ability to play games, accurately evaluate them and write their findings in a concise and entertaining way.

JAMES ASHTON
Specialist in: Driving, action, football, platformers
Current favourite game: *GTA 2*
This month: Refused Matt a holiday. Currently nursing a broken nose.

CHRIS BUXTON
Specialist in: Sport, driving, strategy, films
Current favourite game: *GTA 2*
This month: Opened the door, got on the floor, but didn't walk like a dinosaur.

OWAIN BENNALLACK
Specialist in: Strategy, RPG, adventure
Current favourite game: *Age Of Empires II*
This month: Perfected his impression of a camp Julius Caesar.

JONATHAN DAVIES
Specialist in: Driving, action, strategy, fishing
Current favourite game: *Driver*
This month: Saw Jayne Middlemiss in the corridor at work. Swooned.

KIERON GILLEN
Specialist in: Action, strategy, everything, really
Current favourite game: *System Shock 2*. Still.
This month: Had a week off to 'find himself'. Turns out he'd left himself in bed.

MARK DONALD
Specialist in: Strategy, action, 3D shooters
Current favourite game: *Homeworld*
This month: Decided to swap his PC for a games console. We sacked him.

MATTHEW PIERCE
Specialist in: 3D shooters, driving, sports
Current favourite game: *Truant*
This month: Drank white wine in pubs, oblivious to the sniggering of others.

Third-person, Fire & Theft

GTA 2, Age Of Empires II and *Flight Unlimited 3* head up a bumper crop of gaming treats.

"I'll give you the body you've always wanted," whispered Art Editor Richard. Half an hour later, Sarah Michelle Gellar *still* hadn't turned up. Worse than that though, the team were giggling uncontrollably at my muscular physique. Truth be told, they needn't have employed any Photoshop wizardry at all; merely asked me to disrobe, but... *(Enough!* – Ed).

Anyway, the reason for my pumped-up appearance the release of *GTA 2*, the sequel to the most controversial game of two years ago. If it's not so notorious this time around, it's probably because Max Clifford hasn't been involved in the hype and Take Two are wisely letting the game's quality speak for itself. Which it does. It may not be the fully 3D *Driver*-thon some were hoping for, but its simple genius remains enduringly attractive even in the face of today's incredible 3D technology.

It's a similar case with Microsoft's *Age Of Empires II: Age Of Kings*, which, although doing little to update the original game's basic formula, imports enough thoughtful improvements to justify its protracted development time. A wise decision to release now and beat the Christmas panic, too.

Other goodies just managing to avoid the congestion of Yuletide include our Game Of The Month, *Flight Unlimited 3* – the latest in a trilogy that manages to improve every time despite its seemingly limited remit. Oh, and there's the long-awaited *F/A 18E: Super Hornet* for those who like their mid-air shenanigans with a little more, shall we say... 'action'.

Europress finally make good their promises with the superb *Rally Championship*, and if that's still not enough for you, consider the 3D strategy goodness of *Shadow Company*, the quality of EA's latest sports sims *NHL* and *Madden 2000*, and the insanity of a game which simulates the country's most hated thoroughfare, *M25 Racer*.

There's more, of course, but I'll leave you to discover their dubious charms yourself. Till next month, then.

MATTHEW PIERCE

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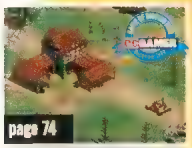

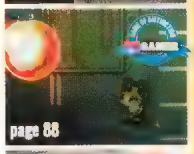

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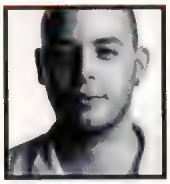
ON THE CD REVIEWS DATABASE

Don't forget: there's a complete archive of every single GAMER review, dating all the way back to issue 1. You'll find it on CD GAMER disc 2, fully updated each month. If you like the look of an older game, or want to swap some titles with friends, insert your CD to find out all about it and what we thought of it when it was released.

ROSS ATHERTON
Specialist in: RPGs, sports, adventure, strategy
Current favourite game: *Age Of Empires II*
This month: Spent a quiet day in the countryside. Score: Ross 5, foxes 0

STEVE OWEN
Specialist in: Driving, strategy, simulation, action
Current favourite game: *Rally Championship*
This month: Enjoyed polishing off a tasty French Fancy. Called Pierre.

JASON WESTON
Specialist in: Hardcore wargames, strategy, RPG
Current favourite game: *Homeworld*
This month: Fought the law. But the law, perhaps unsurprisingly, won.



JES BICKHAM
Specialist in: 3D shooters, action adventure
Current favourite game: *Driver*
This month: Took first prize in a Mr Rumpold lookalike competition.

TIM CANT
Specialist in: Strategy, adventure, platformers
Current favourite game: *C&C: Tiberian Sun*
This month: Tolerated even more name-based double entendres.

JON SMITH
Specialist in: Action, strategy, adventure
Current favourite game: *Age Of Empires II*
This month: Became a dad two weeks early. Still hit his deadline, mind.

DEAN EVANS
Specialist in: Flight simulators, strategy
Current favourite game: *Flight Unlimited 3*
This month: Successfully sued a barber for his unfortunate demi-wave.

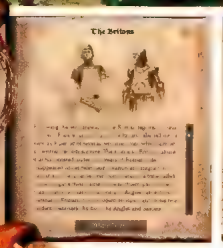
GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY

AGE OF EMPIRES II: AGE OF KINGS

Two years down the line, with an 'if it ain't broke...' sequel, is Microsoft's gaming flagship starting to show its age? Get it? *'Age'?*

(Above) Pick a campaign. Any campaign.

GAME OF DISTINCTION
PC GAMER
December 1999



Depending on your civilisation, your Wonder might look like this.

BUY *Age of Empires II*. It's really good. It's not the most revolutionary of games; it's not revolutionary at all, in fact – but really, really good nonetheless. You must have it. I suppose I had better tell you why...

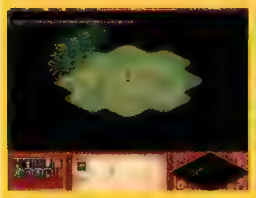
You should mainly have it because there's more to gaming than real-time reflective light-sourcing, gouraud-shaded polygonisation and spinny, shiny, blimey-would-you-look-at-that zoominess. Edge-cutting technical flapdoodle is one thing; good, honest playability quite another. *Age of Empires II* takes no risks, pops no eyes, and breaks only a few hundred yards of new ground, but its tried, tested and ever-so-slightly-improved formula plays as sweet and smooth as chilled chocolate malt on a hot day, with one helluva thirst, and time enough to truly relish the slaking.

Seen it all before? Well, maybe most of it – but you've never seen it done so *well*. Hundreds of quietly intelligent Microsoft and Ensemble Studios artisans have painstakingly groomed an elegant and assured successor to the *Age of Empires* crown. This is no young pretender, eager to shock and impress, but a thoughtful and well-mannered prince of impeccable lineage. *AOEII* stoops not to the attention-grabbing antics of those would-be usurpers who jostle to become the Next Big Thing, but reclines majestically in its throne like an avuncular ruler so unassailably wealthy that

"AOEII Reclines majestically in its throne."

LOOK, MUM – NO FRIENDS!

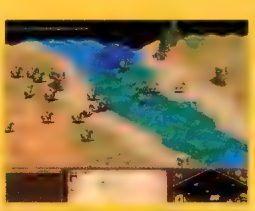
The single-player options in *AOEII* are a real improvement on the original game, picking up where the *Rise of Rome* expansion pack left off in the development of cogent sequences of varied and challenging solo missions. So as well as the free-form customisable play-against-computer-opponents skirmish modes, you've got a choice of five well-constructed and enjoyable campaigns to divert you between multi-player matchups.



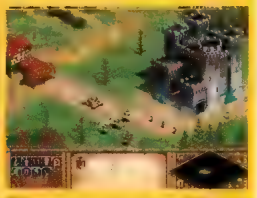
WILLIAM WALLACE: Help the blue-daubed highlander rescue his hilly homeland from the Pommie trash in this beautifully straightforward seven-step tutorial.

JOAN OF ARC: Only The Maid of Orleans can restore the battered French army's pride, and reclaim their grapey homeland from the evil grasp of the English scum.

SALADIN: Wage bloody Jihad to repel crusading European scum from the Holy Land. Your main ally will be your army of camels, whose scent will panic the enemy!



GENGHIS KHAN: You'll need to convince a multitude of suspicious nomadic tribes to work together in armoured harmony to assail the mighty Persian empire.

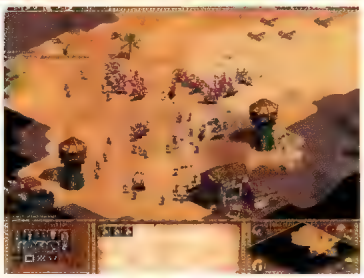


BARBAROSSA: Face down your neighbours and convince them you're the man to run the Holy Roman Empire. A show of ruthless force should do the trick...

Stately

This is me attacking Kieron's forces. Note the remains of an ill-judged battering-ram assault.

(Below) Aha! An unprotected harbour!



he can chortle indulgently at the noisy infighting of his angry barons. It's the unflappable insouciance of good old old money. It's *class*.

So we're back to basics. A battlefield Some soldiers. A fixed isometric perspective. The odd hill. A scattering of resources to fight over. Some sea, and perhaps, a few ships – but no air forces, satellites, force fields, nukes, land mines, spaceships, or teleporters. Just straightforward, instinctive attack and defence: beautifully balanced, responsive to all kinds of tactics, and viscerally immediate

Guard towers crumble before siege weapons, which shatter under a cavalry charge, which is easily repelled by a squadron of pikemen, who are slaughtered by bands of archers, who get wasted by skirmishers, who are no match for a well-armoured infantry assault, which disintegrates under the sustained fire of a pair of guard towers. Instead of ordering twenty kinds of similar-looking robot into a big scrum, you've got to co-ordinate a set of utterly intuitive rock-paper-scissors match-ups in a convincingly 'real world' landscape, in the pursuit of plausible objectives

Storm the battlements. Destroy the castle. Steal the treasures. Annexe the gold mine. Liberate the village. Protect the priest Lay waste to the other guy through force of arms, and bestride the ashes of his kingdom with your iron legs of bloody victory. Translated into common parlance: kick the world's arse

Yet this old-school punchiness is also complemented by a depth and delicacy of flavouring sufficient to satisfy the most jaded of gaming gourmands. *Age of Empires II* succeeds, therefore, for two reasons. Firstly, because it's so simple, and secondly because it's so complex

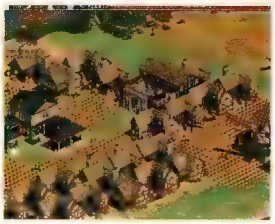
The simplicity, we've mentioned - although you should also note the understated elegance of the two-button interface, and the way in which newcomers learn how to play in a carefully-constructed tutorial campaign, assisted throughout by relevant and concise pop-up instructions

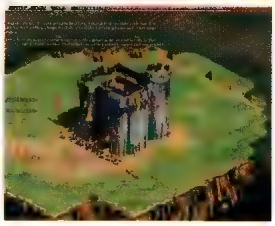
The complexity, though, requires some rather more detailed appreciation. There are many subtleties which conspire to create

MISSION: EDITABLE

One of the best things about *Age of Empires* was its superb scenario editor, and one of the best things about that was the way it encouraged you to create your own AI 'playbook'. Well, the mission editor in *AOEII* is just as good as in the earlier game, enabling you to construct complex event-driven scenarios with ease. But the DIY-AI angle is even *more* thoroughly covered. A magnificent 90-page on-line manual teaches you a simple but powerful C-styled programming language, then tells you how to use it to create your own computer-player personalities and integrate them with the game. Fantastic!

Camels really do make horses run away because of the smell. Perhaps this screenshot (above) rather over-illustrates the point, though.





AOEII's velvety texture; a quiet multitude of tweaks, refinements and sensible improvements over the original game Individually, each enriches the sequel by only a fractional degree – but the incremental effect is profound.

The overhauled graphics, for example, with their smaller figures and more proportional buildings, may seem like a series of cosmetic enhancements (especially when compared to the bolder but soon abandoned images of towering buildings and monstrous fortifications shown in last year's previews), but they do in fact offer a more effective tactical overview. With an expanded field of vision at 1280 by 1024 resolution, you can keep an eye on your trebuchets as they hurl their deadly payloads towards the enemy town, while watching over your frontline assault troops at the same time, and *still* keeping track of the hand-to hand battle raging for control of that northern hilltop. You can see units previously hidden behind buildings, with a neat coloured outline effect. You can assess the effectiveness of another player's frontal assault by examining the corpse-piles left behind. And – oh, yes – it all looks lovely.

Similarly, while the move forward in time from dawn-of-civilisation to Middle Ages doesn't seem to have resulted in any *major* change to the basic *AOE* gameplay engine (we're still hunting, fishing and foraging our way to victory), it's actually accompanied by a sizeable number of novelties and revisions

Having evolved a bit further than sticks and stones, *AOEII's* merry folk have taken advantage of the intervening centuries to develop a more complex notion of economy than their forebears. Allied powers can now earn themselves gold by

SYSTEM MISER

How *Age Of Empires II* will play on *your* PC

■ Test System **P200, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card**

VERDICT: At low resolution, this machine runs *AOEII* fairly happily. There's the occasional pause, but nothing too bad.

■ Test System **PII 350, 64Mb RAM, 12Mb Voodoo 2**

VERDICT: No problems at all. You should get perfect performance on any PII-based machine or above.

DEATH TO YOU ALL! DEATH, I SAY! DEEEAAAAAATHHH!

Fun though the *AOEII* single-player campaign games may be, they are as nothing when compared to the might and regal majesty of the full-on multi-player experience. This can be simulated, to a degree, with computer opposition – but nothing can really come anywhere near close to the unpredictability and pulse-pounding vindictiveness of human-on-human engagement.

The more players the better, because a greater array of potential enemies forces you to think hard about diplomacy, and look sharp at all times for the sudden sneak attack. The map doesn't tend to get divided up so neatly, and combat is usually less death-or-glory. With the game moving at speed, it can be hard for inexperienced players to manage their tactics in the heat of battle as they've been used to in the pauseable solo game, resulting in some untidy and fairly random melees to begin with. However, skill and subtlety will eventually prevail, and you'll soon find yourself feinting, covering and flanking with the best of them.

There's one tremendously enjoyable new mode of play with *AOEII*: 'Regicide', wherein each player starts with a castle and a king, and... well, you can guess the rest. Highly recommended by PC GAMER.

The King gets cut down as he tries to flee.

Ordinary buildings are better-looking than ever, really matching your civ and age.

(Below) Gates open for friendlies while keeping enemies locked out.

ferrying trade carts between their centres, *Civ*-style. They can also buy and sell food, wood and stone once they've built a marketplace (Original *AOE* marketplace upgrades have been re-distributed). Prices fluctuate according to demand, so while 100 food might sell for 80 gold at the beginning of a game, you'll be lucky to get 35, an hour or so later. Like so much in this game, the new marketplace is a simple but well-implemented feature whose cleverness you only begin to appreciate after a lengthy and loving acquaintance

Alongside their economic progress, *AOEII's* tiny beings have also taken time to upgrade their basic defensive capabilities, with a new feature which sends ripples through the entire game: garrisoning Soldiers, monks and peasants can now be posted *inside* town centres and guard towers, lending extra firepower to the structures and gaining protection in return. Not only does this afford the canny player much more flexibility in defence, but it's also a deterrent to early 'rushes' in a multi-player skirmish. A horde of hard-working but essentially puny peasants, taken by surprise in the opening stages of a game, need no longer succumb instantaneously to their attackers. They can now retreat to the safety of their town centre, from where they can lob arrows at intruders until they fall over or run away.

Anti-emplacement firepower arrives later on from land and sea, courtesy of the new gunpowder technologies; but with all siege weapons now *highly* vulnerable to attack, the basic interplay between attack and defence in *AOEII* seems compellingly fluid. The new castle can garrison substantial armies, rain arrows down on attackers, construct mighty trebuchets and churn out a legion of units unique to each one of the game's 13 civilisations – but it still can't withstand a couple of minutes' sustained bombardment without reinforcement. Souped-up infantry units, now more effective against buildings, are just another element in this intricate re-balancing of the game's forces, which has resulted in a significantly more adaptable tactical model

"Oversights in the original have been seen to."

Major oversights and niggles in the original game have been seen to. The notoriously poor pathfinding algorithms, which resulted in many a long-lost soldier, have been completely revamped, and are much more effective than before. Written notifications are now in place to keep you abreast of building and unit-conscription progress; a single button press will focus on any idle villager; 'gather points' enables you to create units at a location of your choice, and anyone who didn't discover it in the excellent *Rise of Rome* expansion for *AOE* will be delighted to find automatic order stacking now implemented at each production centre.

The much wished-for option to choose 'random' civs and map types for a multi-player skirmish, is also now in place. Intelligent formation control, a colourful on-line tech tree, the ability to record games for

YOUR CIV OR MINE?

***Age of Empires*, you may remember, offered you 12 differently-characterised civilisations to choose from. But while *AOEII* enlarges your civ-pool by only one, it goes out of its way to differentiate more radically between its 13 cultures. In addition to more significant gameplay bonuses, each civilisation gets their own 'unique' unit (constructed at their castle), along with customised technology trees and a unique 'team bonus' to encourage alliance play in skirmish mode. As a result, the individual characters of each culture shine through much more strongly than in the previous game, and expert gamers will play each civ quite differently.**

CLIMBING THE TECH TREE

This scrollable map of all possible investments is available at any time during a game of *AOEII*. The red boxes are buildings, the green ones technologies, and the blue ones are military units. Note that certain squares are greyed out – in this case, for example, the onager and siege onager. This simply means that the civilisation in question – here, Turkey – has no access to these developments. The precise layout of each culture's tech tree is slightly, but crucially, distinct from the others.

This tech tree is available at any time during a game. It automatically pauses a single-player game, but during a multi-player affair you'd be well-advised to be well-informed.

D'OH!

Although the development of human-like Artificial Intelligence has progressed tremendously in some sectors of the games world recently, convincing real-time computer strategy opponents are still thin on the ground. *AOEII's* built-in AI is by no means the worst we've ever seen, but it's nothing like the best either. Entertain yourself by sending a single fast cavalry unit to intercept an attacking squadron, then leading the blindly-following morons on a circular dance of death across your guard towers' killing zones. Or simply erect a halfway decent defensive perimeter, then sit back and enjoy the carnage as an endless succession of small enemy groups dash themselves against it. Brainlessly.

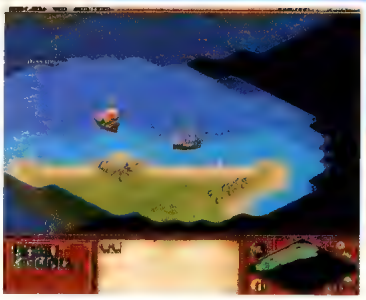
later playback, and a small blow for sexual equality in the shape of female peasants (who, incidentally, are equally effective as males), are all further additions which will change no-one's life, but make everything just that little bit *nicer*.

Oh, and it's hardly mentioned in the documentation, but perhaps the most radical new feature in *AOEII* – for single-player games, at least – is a slight change in the 'pause' function. You may remember that its prequel froze solid on pause, *forcing* you to play in real time. *AOEII*, on the other hand, allows you not only to scroll around the map and survey your territory, but to actually select units and issue orders to troops and buildings, while your computer opponents stand motionless.

This gives you an enormous new degree of freedom and control: freedom to take your time and co-ordinate complex manoeuvres with repeated on/off jigglings of the pause button, and precise control over the actions of every individual unit from one game second to the next .

The instant an enemy hoves into view, your finger reaches straight for F3, to give you time to optimise your defensive

Fire and Demolition ships add to your naval arsenal.



"FTS offers a tangle of positives and negatives."

response. Battles are broken up into scratchy fragments of unpaused micro-moments, as you find yourself repeatedly halting the action to take time out and reassess the situation.

As in the recently-released *Black Moon Chronicles*, (which offered a similar facility), this shift from RTS – (real-time strategy) – to FTS – (freeze-time strategy) – throws up a tangle of positive and negative ramifications. It can easily, for example, make things feel rather laborious; slowing down the pace, defusing the tension, and enabling you to spend far too long messing about with time-wasting details, at the expense of the bigger picture. On the other hand, of course, it also enables you to execute every order flawlessly, and gain a real appreciation of the game's tactical subtlety, without feeling that you're constantly battling against time to make the best of a situation that's running away from you.

Personally, I'm all for the new flexibility. It's a happy medium between real-time and turn-based play – and once you've got used to it, you'll find the original game, bereft of the freeze time luxury, unplayably restrictive. It would be nice to think, by the way, that the disciplined player could avoid pause-button over-indulgence; but the reaction swiftly becomes almost instinctual. There's a sort of physical 'drowning reflex' in operation – with the best intentions in the world, it's almost impossible not to jab for the breathing space of a panic button when an enemy assault looms suddenly from the fog of war.

So, that's *Age of Empires II*: an unpretentious, conservative upgrade to a best-selling strategy game which was never particularly original in the first place.There's a solid selection of new features, all of which are entirely welcome. OK, so it's difficult to get interested in the formation-rotation system (a hangover from abandoned plans to award 'flanking' damage bonuses); and the alternate mini-map modes verge on the needless; and, oh yes, the inability to re-garrison units in their production centres after construction is rather disappointing.

The computer AI can also be pretty stupid most of the time, tending to dribble troops at you rather than make concerted assaults, but, all that aside, *AOEII* is a terrifically enjoyable strategy title with broad appeal and a first-rate multi-player mode.

Maybe there are only a few new buildings, and a handful of radically new units – but the improved balance,more effectively differentiated civilisations, freeze-time facility, improved collection of solo campaigns, option to increase multi-player population limits to 200 and so many more pleasurable details, have made this a high priority purchase. Go buy it. Now.

JON SMITH

Formations mean more effective combat and much easier marshalling of troops.

PCGAMER PROFILE

AOEII is:
- Deeply rewarding
- Extensively playtested
- But undoubtedly better multi-player than solo

AOEII is not:
- Intimidating
- A quantum leap in games design
- Blessed with the smartest AI in the world... ever

■ Publisher **Microsoft** ■ Developer **Ensemble Studios/Microsoft** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb RAM, 180Mb HD** ■ Recommended **PII 300, 64Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **Serial, Modem, Internet, Network** ■ Web Address **www.microsoft.com/games** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Homeworld PCG 75 78%
Taking the real-time strategy game into a whole new dimension and galaxy.

C&C: Tiberian Sun PCG 73 92%
Vintage performer with a '99 installment. More focus on hi-tech bloodshed.

PCGAMER
Perfectly polished, endlessly playable and compellingly open-ended – a top-class sequel.

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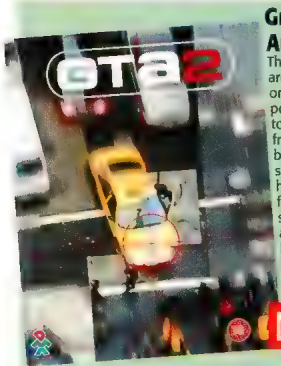

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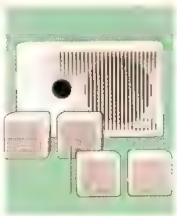

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GENRE: ACTION/STRATEGY

CUTTHROATS

Is that dandruff on your shoulder, or do you own a parrot?

There's seamen all over the place. What? Whaaat?
There are plenty of towns to visit, but they're pretty unmemorable.
(Above) Sea battles tend to be short and brutish. Just like me.

AAR, ME HEARTIES

Although *Cutthroats* is set between the years 1625 and 1700, pirates are still around today. Modern-day buccaneers harass ships in the China Sea, except that they're armed with Uzis rather than cutlasses. There are also software pirates, but these aren't armed with anything. Oh, and pirate radio...

PC GAMER PROFILE

Cutthroats is:
- A bit like *Elite*
- Watery
- Slightly piratical

Cutthroats is not:
- Imaginative
- Exciting
- Gripping

THE life of a pirate was undoubtedly one to be envied. Cruising from one Caribbean island to another, drinking rum and going "Yo, ho, ho," a lot – in fact, very much like how I'm planning to spend my retirement. I shall definitely not however, be taking a copy of *Cutthroats* with me to the Spanish Main.

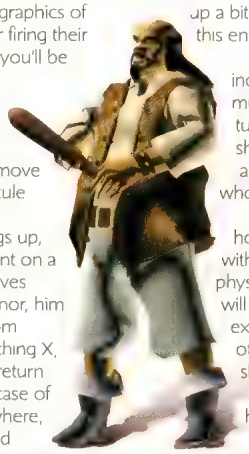
Cutthroats is meant to be a saga of booty-gathering buccaneers, but the tropical atmosphere is noticeably absent. All you can do with the rum is flog it, and I didn't manage a single 'Ho' all weekend.

"I didn't manage a single 'Ho'."

When you stick the CD into your PC you essentially get a maritime *Elite*. You sail from island to island buying and selling goods, attacking anyone smaller than you and plundering their cargo. You can buy and/or steal bigger ships, hire men, raid towns, go on simple missions, and search for buried treasure

What you don't get is any evidence of inspiration or imagination. For the most part it's a case of watching a tiny ship drifting around a big, blue sea. The most exciting bit is when you attack other ships – then you get some reasonably neat graphics of galleons circling each other firing their cannons. Most of the time you'll be staring either at a tiny boat surrounded by blue, or a static map screen that doesn't even tell you the names of places until you move the cursor over the minuscule pins that are stuck in them.

Attempts to liven things up, are half-hearted. Getting sent on a mission, for example, involves going to see a town governor, him asking you to retrieve X from island Y, going to Y and fetching X, and getting gold pieces in return Searching for treasure is a case of getting a map from somewhere, sailing to the indicated island and clicking the 'Dig up treasure' button, whereupon your gold piece counter goes up a bit. Some people might consider this enthralling. I don't



Other flaws, while we're at it, include insufferably repetitive music, bewildering controls that turn simple tasks like stocking your ship with food into an arcane art, and scary rendered governors who shake hands with thin air

It is possible to spend several hours at a time playing *Cutthroats* without suffering too much actual physical discomfort, but at no time will you be surprised, astounded, excited, amused, – or any of the other feelings a worthwhile game should engender.

Basically, it's not so much "Yo, ho, ho," as "Oh. Ho hum."

MATTHEW PIERCE

■ Publisher **Eidos** ■ Developer **Hothouse** ■ Price **£40** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb RAM, Win95/98**
■ Recommended **P233, 64Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **None** ■ Parrots **None**
■ Web Address **www.eidos.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

It has all the basics of a diverting game, but is sadly lacking in sparkle and finesse.

40%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Corsairs PCG 72, **61%**
Slightly less disappointing piratical trade-and-fight romp. Not too taxing.

X: Beyond The Frontier PCG 75, **37%**
Elite wannabe which fell on its face last issue. *Freelancer* will be much better.

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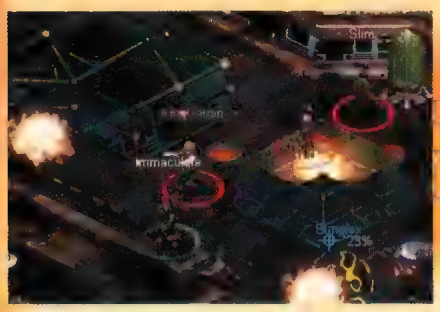

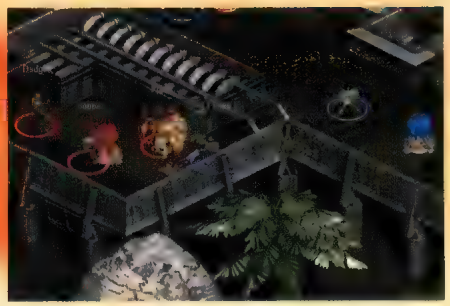

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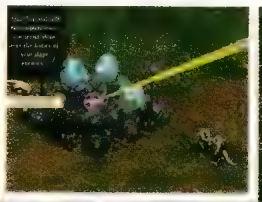
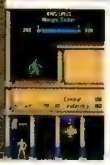
GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY

SEVEN KINGDOMS II: THE FRYHTAN WARS

This game would very much like to get medieval on your 'ass'.

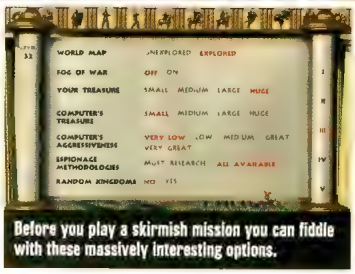
The routes your units will take are illustrated by excellent bendy lines.





Some of the scary Fryhtan buildings can summon huge energy blasts that seem to come from outer space.

Seven Kingdoms II occasionally sports some fairly cool weather effects.



Before you play a skirmish mission you can fiddle with these massively interesting options.

THEM AND US

Rather than being a 'straight' simulation of medieval combat, *Seven Kingdoms II* has a bit of a fantasy slant. As well as fighting the rival human empires, you've also got to deal with the (oh dear) Fryhtans. They come in several flavours, ranging from the enormous, boulder hurling Grokken to the sinister, squid-like Bregma. Takes all sorts, I suppose.

PC GAMER PROFILE

Seven Kingdoms II is:
- A complex game that'll keep you busy
- Packed with all sorts of options
- Going to be adored by anoraks everywhere

Seven Kingdoms II is not.
- A particularly fine-looking game
- Easy to play without completing the training lessons
- Going to set the real-time strategy world on fire

Unlucky

THERE seems to be a blurring of boundaries between the real-time strategy and action genres. With titles such as *Homeworld*, *Battlezone* and *Hidden And Dangerous*, these days, who's to say where tactics ends and arcadey blasting begins?

Actually, it's us. Let there be no doubt. *Seven Kingdoms II* lies *well* within the boundaries of the 'strategy' bit of our RTS diagram. There are no fancy 3D visuals, and no opportunities to personally snipe your unwary opponents' brains out. Buildings might (bizarrely) explode, but if gut-busting mayhem is high on your agenda you can forget about *SKII* and start saving for *C&C Renegade* or *Battlezone 2* instead. If, however you're a hard-core traditional strategy buff then this little baby might be just up your street

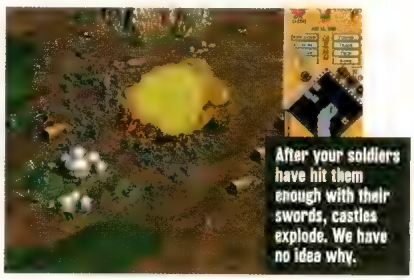
"It is not for the impatient gamer."

We reviewed the original *Seven Kingdoms* in PCG 53, and it was awarded a respectable 75%. The feeling was that while the game's scope was impressively ambitious, the execution was slightly lacking and it never became truly engaging. *SKII* improves on its predecessor with better graphics, more races and a much slicker interface. The basic thrust of the gameplay remains the same though - make bases, train soldiers and deck the opponents before they do it to you.

It's more complicated than that in practice: you've got to keep your subjects happy, research new technologies, make pacts, spy on your foes...there's a lot to get to grips with. *SKII* has a hell of a lot to it, and the number of training missions (eight) should give you some idea of its complexity Once you've mastered single player games (which include full campaign, scenario and skirmish modes), you can then to prove your skills against your chums and the rest of the world via the Internet.

Sadly, *SKII* will alienate many. The graphics are old fashioned, and no matter how hard you search there's not a smidgen of light-sourcing to be found. Audio-wise, there's a collection of cliched orchestral tunes. The effects sound terrible and seem too quiet, and the sword-on castle effect sounds eerily like the snip of a barber's scissors. The control system isn't particularly intuitive either, meaning it'll take a bit of getting used to before you feel you've got a handle on everything.

If you can cope with *SKII's* faults you'll probably find it rewarding, but it's not for the impatient gamer. **TIM CANT**



After your soldiers have hit them enough with their swords, castles explode. We have no idea why.

■ Publisher **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer **Enlight Software** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P120, 32 Mb RAM, 80MB HD space** ■ Recommended **P233, 64Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **Internet, LAN, serial and modem play** ■ Web Address **www.sevenkingdomsii.com** ■ Release Date **October**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

TA: Kingdoms PCG 73, 84%
Suitably fantasy-tinged and cracking stuff, but not as good as the original.

Age of Empires II PCG 76, 90%
All-encompassing medieval city-building and RTS. A miracle of balancing.

PC GAMER
An ambitious but flawed strategy game in the classic mould. You'll get out what you put in.
73%

GENRE: ACTION/STRATEGY

SHADOW COMPANY: LEFT FOR DEAD

Left for dead? Best take the first right for a quick exit then.

Ugh, dandruff? Haven't you heard of Head & Shoulders?
You'll end up playing most of the game from the god-view.
AS SEEN ON TV!
watch it
Tanks are always welcome, but they're driven by cursors and don't feel like tanks.
MENU

Fatigued

IMAGINE you're lying in a thicket, squinting down the long, reassuring barrel of an AK-47. Accessorised with more ammo belts than a Mexican bandit, you pause only to suppress a snicker as an enemy patrol walks sweetly into your line of fire. Clik. Clik. You're out of ammo! What do you do? Pull back to a safer position? Calmly reload? Or just sit stock still, taking bullets to the face like Hans Moretti, not daring to touch your spare ammo until a superior officer says you can?

The hard-bitten mercenaries you command in *Shadow Company* choose the last option every time. After all, they only killed their first man when aged 12, spent 20 years in the French Foreign Legion, and reckon themselves the roughest bunch of desperados this side of a government cover-up. Ostensibly, *Shadow Company* covers the same covert ops ground as outfits like *Jagged Alliance 2* and *Commandos*. Accept some cash from a shady government agent, assemble a squad of killers, then drop in on a Third World country to conduct a bit of foreign policy i.e. blow up ammo dumps and oil depots. In theory, it's the classic mix of strategy with stealth-based, real-time military adventurism. Unfortunately, *Shadow Company* is riddled with more holes than Bonnie and Clyde.

Your men are picked from the mercenaries' yellow pages which lists their range of skills. So you want a sneaky snake of a fella to dispose of guards silently? Okay, you need someone with a high infiltration rating so he can approach unseen. But that's not all. If he doesn't have a gold medal in stealth he'll be louder than an orange cagoule in the Arctic, giving himself away with noisy blunders. Then he's got to have

"A wilfully obstructive interface."

the right weapon skill – choose from another six categories. It's ridiculously beardy. You've got to spend ages looking for decathletes in the martial arts rather than playing the game.

Oh, the game. With its versatile real-time engine *Shadow Company* should be a great experience, but it's marred by an interface so wilfully obstructive it's tempting to think it was designed by a traitorous double agent who's trying to sabotage your every move.

The free-floating camera system is designed to be the ultimate tactical tool, but controlling it is like trying to stay upright in a washing machine. Try changing the view under pressure and you're sent on an orbit of the outer regions of the map while your men are shot to pieces in an unsupervised firefight. Then there's the fatal lack of group commands so you can't form hot-keyed squads, and a clumsy inventory system that makes it harder for your men to change weapons than sex.

But just as it becomes distressing to watch *Shadow Company* suck air through the gaping chest wound of gameplay, the campaign walks up and puts a bullet through its head. The sprawling missions drag themselves across creativity-free combat zones containing random, arbitrary objectives. It's deeply uninspiring and the sparseness of terrain completely undermines the game's tactical raison d'etre. Don't volunteer for this one.

MARK DONALD

DESPERATE PLAN

Shadow Company **features a great idea that should be in every strategy game. Instead of just giving you a vague mission briefing and a child's sketch of a map, it provides photos of your objectives so you can plan your mission in detail before rushing into the fray. Of course, this being *Shadow Company*, it cocks up its good idea as the terrain is too basic to really allow for any kind of tactical approach. Still, the idea's out the bag now, so hopefully a good game will come along one day and make the most of it.**

PCGAMER PROFILE

Shadow Company is
- Real-time, small arms warfare
- In the *Commandos* style
- Undone by a muddled interface

Shadow Company is not:
- Well-designed
- Exciting or compelling
- Fast-paced

■ Publisher **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer **Sinister Games** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P233, 32Mb RAM, 400Mb HD, 3D card** ■ Recommended **PII 266, 64Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3dfx, Direct3D** ■ Multi Player **Network, modem** ■ Web Address **www.sinistergames.com** ■ Re ease Date **Out now**

PCGAMER Real-time squad-fodder shoots itself in the foot with drab missions and design flaws. **63%**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Jagged Alliance 2 PCG 73, 83%. Traditional, turn-based, *X-COM*-type subterfuge – looks dated but plays well.

Abomination PCG75, 89%. Excellent action/strategy featuring squads, zombies and anus-shaped aliens.

BRINGING YOUR NIGHT

MARES TO LIFE...

You do not want to know what I know. Knowledge IS FEAR.
A black hole that devours that part of the self you cherish.

NOCTURNE™

Coming Halloween 1999

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PC CD

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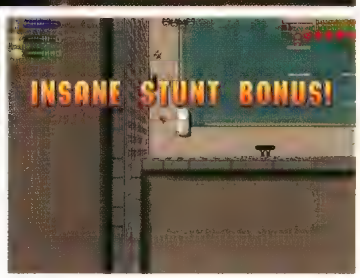
GENRE: RACING: ARCADE

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

Great Traffic Accidents! Guns & Terrorist Activities! Good, Terrible or Average?

Blues Brothers-style multi-cop chases are fairly commonplace if you're naughty. Which you will be.



STREET TALKING

1. This is you. The arrows buzzing about your head point to the nearest available mission.
2. The cops always come in twos. That way one can chew gum while the other tries to walk straight.
3. The scumbags in the red shirts are muggers. What's strange (and a bit annoying) is that you can't mug them back. You can blow them up, though, which is a bonus.
4. The 'respectometer' shows your standing with the gangs operating in the current city. The middle settings reveal that they don't even know I exist yet. Ha. They'll soon learn to fear me.

ON THE CD

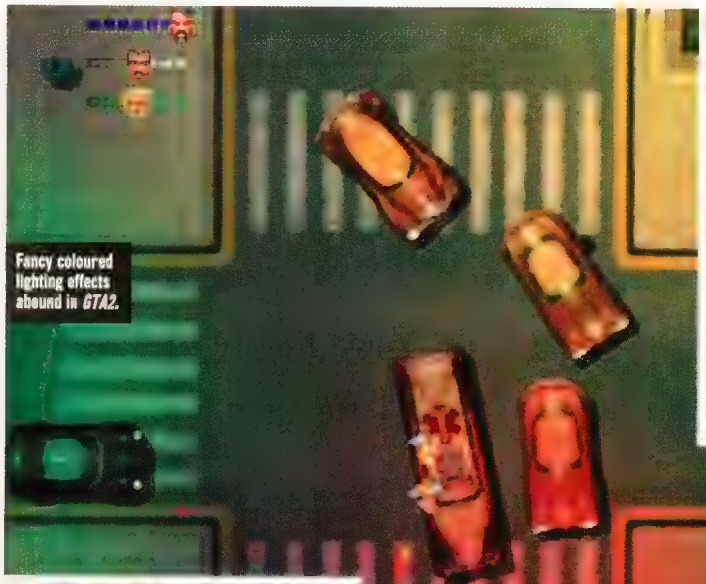
THIS just happened: fleeing a botched mission deep in Yakuza territory, and increasingly annoyed by the pot shots peppering my truck, I mount the pavement to roll over dozens of gangsters on my dash north home.

Pissed off, the Yakuza follow me into my turf while a string of cop cars zero in from every direction. My peeps despatch the Yakuza hit squads but the cops are altogether tougher. My truck is too slow to outrun them, so I car-jack a gold B-Type. But I've barely gone a block when a chap after my own heart hauls me out and leaves me prostrate in the road. Furiously, I nick a cop's car and chase the twice-nicked B-Type, the police pursuing in rabid packs behind.

This sort of unscheduled mayhem is always on in *Grand Theft Auto 2* and it's what makes it so brilliant. If you lost your morals to *Grand Theft Auto*, you'll already know that DMA's cars and caper classic is wilder than the Old Kent Road on a Friday night. Believe me, the sequel makes *GTA's* argey-bargey look about as convincing as slumming actors in Boyz In The Hood. *Grand Theft Auto 2* is the comic Cosa Nostra of crim-sims, stylish and ultra-violent but never forgetting that life is most exciting when short and sweet.

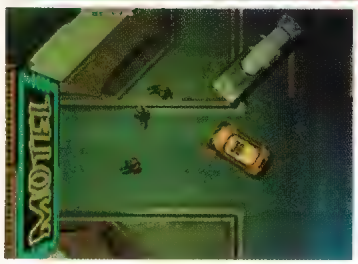
Many, many games are not fun. They might be addictive, satisfying or perplexing, but, away from multi-player games, the boffins of game creation are increasingly banishing laugh-out-loud hysteria. *GTA2* has you giggling, swearing and messing up missions just for the kick of it. Anyone worried about videogame violence could do a lot worse than actually watch someone playing *GTA2*. You'll see uglier scenes at Sainsburys.

There are just a few simple ingredients in this magical cake mix. Obviously, there's



Fancy coloured lighting effects abound in *GTA2*.

Structures and buildings can now be climbed.



Joyride

the top-down traffic-packed city where everything can be robbed, ridden and driven into an oncoming bus. In addition, destructive weapons and destructible pedestrians abound

It's the third, fresh ingredient – the introduction of rival gangs – that makes the cake rise. *GTA2* is all about respect. Not the kind of respect you've got for your grandparents for still hanging on in there; more the kind you had for the school bully

"Gangs and 'respect' add a new dynamic."

as he dangled your brother over the stairwell. A complicated kind of respect, then, most easily earned by nastiness.

To get in with one gang you have to work against the others. You can't work for anyone until you've proved yourself, usually by reducing the ranks of the opposition. A good way to start your criminal career is to kick up a big ruckus and see who is least annoyed with you when the dust settles

Gangs and 'respect' add a dynamic wholly absent from the original's rather aimless meandering. Completing missions boosts your respect – but failing one might see you lose enough face to jeopardise your status with a particular gang for good.

Just as *C&C* felt like little soldiers without the hassle of losing pieces to the dog, *GTA2* brings a shelf of matchbox cars and their stories to life. It is, as DMA would stress, nothing more than a big toy-box. There is a plot of sorts, involving the ascent of a ruthless Japanese corporation called the Zaibatsu. Be assured that it takes the back seat though and is pieced together by the dozens of missions and little snippets of radio DJ chatter

Graphics are there primarily to bring the toys to life, not to sell 3D cards. Indeed, they're so functional that it's only when you dig out the original that you appreciate the changes. While there has been both an aesthetic and functional face-lift (particularly with the introduction of climbable buildings which let you lob bombs off the roof) looks won't sell *GTA2*. In a post-*Driver* world, its visual style is a judged risk. It's not

GANG STARS

There are seven factions warring in the mean streets of *Grand Theft Auto 2*.

THE AMERICAN PATRIOTS
Basically rednecks, these guys drive pick-ups emblazoned with the Confederacy flag and look out for their brothers. Literally.

THE SCIENTISTS
Mad, bad, and mad, the scientists are the nearest to James Bond in *Grand Theft Auto 2*, having all the best gadgets. Never shaken, avoid stirring.

THE ZAIBATSU
This giant Japanese corporation is at the heart of the plot. It wants to control the world and isn't at all modelled on Sony. Can earn thousands of points if correctly deployed in a game of scrabble

THE YAKUZA
The slickest gangsters in the game. Their car is a great drive until you hit a wall at top speed.

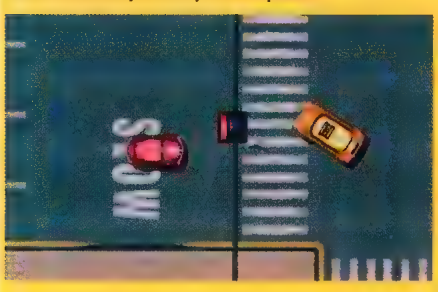
THE RUSSIAN MAFIA
"I'm going to make you an offer you can't refuse. 2000 bottles of Smirnoff and a bag of nuclear waste, yours for $10,000, mateski."

The Krazies
A relative term in *Grand Theft Auto 2*, it's no surprise that half their missions see you stamping out outlandish behaviour in rival gangs. Bah, amateurs.

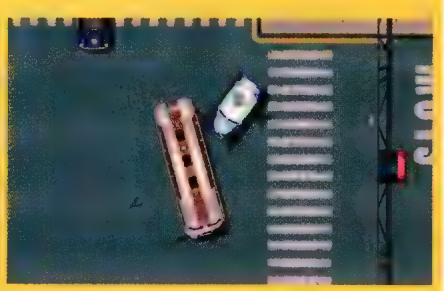
THE KRISHNAS
The fodder of the first game has gone up in the world. What will happen to the Elvises in *Grand Theft Auto 3*, eh?

GOING STRAIGHT

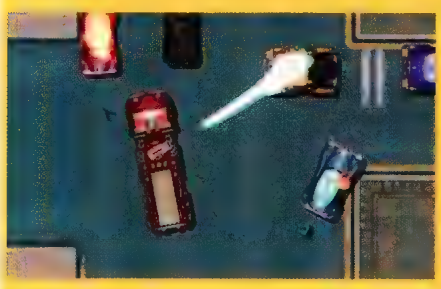
Do violent games cause crime or does the canker lie within us all? We conduct experiments in DMA's morally murky metropolis.



TAXI DRIVER
I rob a taxi and within seconds I've secured a passenger and a dollar every second. Sadly, the roads are choked with idiots and within moments I plough into a bus. My passenger flees and I see red, driving out of the flames to run him down like Travis Bickle with better hand-eye co-ordination. In the distance, the familiar sirens sound...

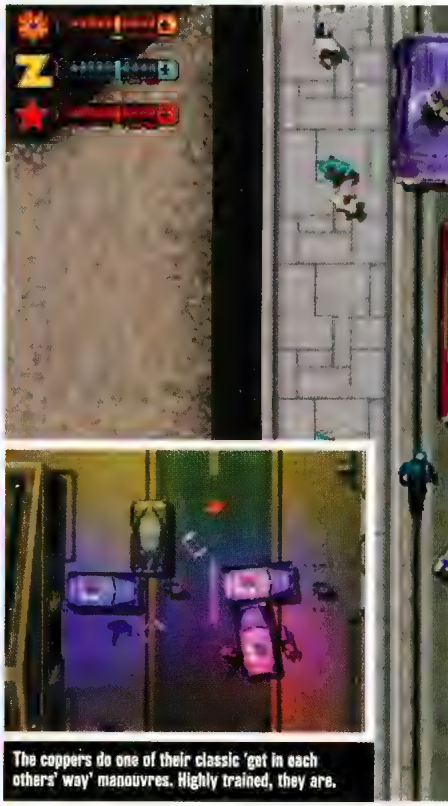


ON THE BUSES
A life on the buses appears to be a jolly jape, so I acquire a vehicle and a bus load of passengers. The self-christened Love Bus cruises as erratically as the Clapham Omnibus in Harlem. Sadly, the passengers aren't paying, so there's only one thing for it. I'm afraid they needn't have invested in that monthly bus pass.



FIRE-FIGHTER
The resultant flames draw heroes to the scene like moths around an ultraviolet bulb. The firemen's huge truck and enormous water cannon appeals to something deep in me, so I acquire a fire engine and set out to douse the flames engulfing my city. Sadly, now I've swapped sides, the flames have died down somewhat. Molotov cocktails cook up a hot training session and the familiar downward spiral begins again.

GTA2 BLUES
The cops have the best cars *and* a license to kill in their quest to crush crime. I acquire a police vehicle and administer tough love. The FBI disapproves and a Blues Brothers-style epic kicks off through most of the city, ending with the destruction of cops, their cars, some special agents and a tank or two.



The coppers do one of their classic 'get in each others' way' manouvres. Highly trained, they are.

Like a 17-year-old youth, I pull donuts in the streets.

⇨ so much 100-polygons per car – it's one polygon per car

The engine enables screens choked with cars and pedestrians, pulls back and zooms as your speed changes and brings out the flavour of the city without wasting CPU time on decoration. Would it be better in full 3D? Yes, but that's not the most important thing under the microscope here. DMA should be congratulated for keeping up its eye on the importance of the game rather than up with the Joneses.

Much more important in bringing the toys to life is improved AI. It won't trouble Kasparov, but *GTA2* is smart enough to move traffic and pedestrians about realistically. Rather than sit glumly until the player conveniently looks elsewhere, drivers trapped by car crashes back out and try to sniff out a new route like little mole rats

The police are smarter too, at least while on four wheels. They hurtle towards you like badgers on roller-skates and can't be thrown without a lot of uncivil driving. There are several levels of response, too (see The Many Arms Of The Law). No street robber survives the National Guard for long, although getting into one of their tanks can extend your life expectancy. Cops are not the only sentient(ish) inhabitants of *GTA2*

Petty criminals abound, with muggers tempting the trigger of even the stealthiest player and car robbers getting in your way just enough to be enjoyably irritating. A superb touch is that you'll sometimes rob a car only to be hauled out again by its owner.

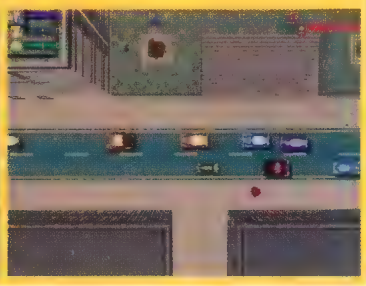
While many will again enjoy *GTA* primarily as a playground

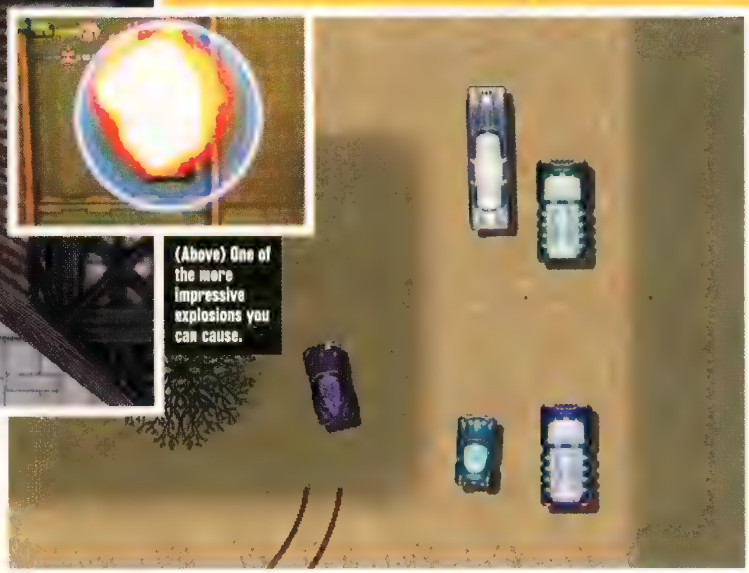
ELVIS LIVES

Remember the trains of chanting Krishna devotees from *Grand Theft Auto* and the satisfying splat as you drove over the whole lot? With their reincarnation as a full-blown gang, the gap at the bottom of the food chain has been filled by little trails of Elvis impersonators 'huh-huh'-ing their way about the city. They go pop like The King taking a burger too far.

VIEW FINDER

The camera rises and falls depending on your speed – and stopping distance. The shot on the left shows the view on foot, at a steady 4kph. Scream by in a car (right) and you'll get an even bigger, blurrier, and hairier picture.





(Above) One of the more impressive explosions you can cause.

for this mania, it's where the missions meet the madness that it all comes together. After beginning a mission at a phone box, you set off to destroy a building, kidnap a cop or whatever. In the course of your adventures, it's almost inevitable that you'll step on

"There's some method to the madness."

someone's toes, drawing in little plots like a cult B movie. Granted, it's not complicated stuff – maybe a lack of getaway wheels in a rival gang's territory – but it's still the nearest thing yet to the non-linear stories discussed by the likes of Charles Cecil

There's also method to the madness, with bonuses rewarding outlandish play. Doing almost anything anti social makes you money, which can be spent on car weapons, a respray or even saving your game. Money is really points in disguise, the old 'score' that's quietly left games without anyone noticing. In *GTA2*, you push your score for the hell of it, squishing pedestrians for an extra 30 bucks. Useful social skills are rewarded, like accuracy with a machine-gun, insane stunts off the ramps or a decent performance in kill frenzies that give you a weapon, time-limit and target

Weapons are much less of an afterthought this time around. Featureless crates have been replaced by spinning pick up graphics, and weapons are harder to come by as well. Better weapons are found in gang strongholds or during a mission

Machine-guns are fast and convenient, but flame-throwers and rocket launchers pack real power. Some of the weapons particularly Molotov cocktails, are as much of a threat to you as to your enemies Silenced Uzi's are a favourite, enabling you to sneak up on foes without a sound. There are also gang specific weapons such as a scientists' microwave gun, emitting an electrical stream that hops from target to target. You can add weapons to your vehicle if you plan to keep a car long

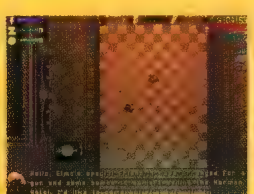
PILL POPPING

Dotted around the city are *GTA* pills. Collect the lot and you enter secret bonus levels where you can indulge in dirt car racing or ice cream van destruction. With the typical swagger of *GTA2*, you don't just win a few thousand pounds – you can make a million in these levels. It's like a Nintendo game gone bad.

MISSION POSSIBLE (JUST): A TEN-STEP CRIME PLAN

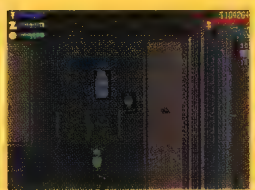
Here's what you'll be handling. Think you can hack it? Then read on...

1. Missions are called in via a call box. A car needs robbing, we read, so off we go.

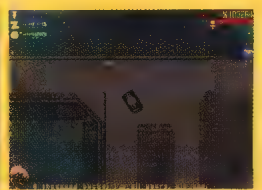


2. Meet Elmo's special friend. We've driven right into the University gallery to meet him.

3. We pick up a gun and the Molotov cocktails. Flaming sambucas all round!



4. It's almost impossible not to ram the cop car and blow the mission. Almost...



5. Carefully, we pick up the male hooker. (We ran him over the first two times).

SYSTEM MISER

How *Grand Theft Auto 2* will play on *your* PC.

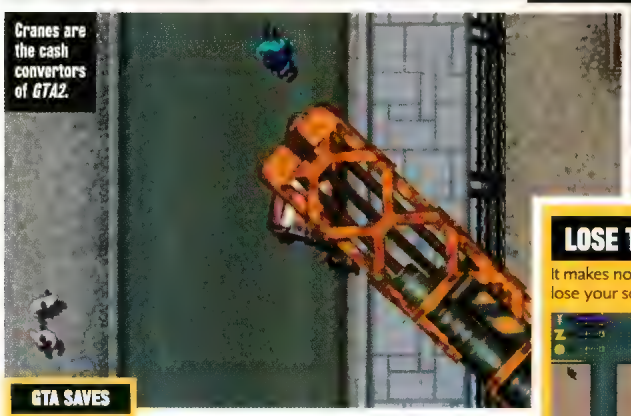
■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card**

VERDICT: Not too bad at all. There's the odd caching pause, which can disrupt pin-point driving, but good overall.

■ Test System **P200, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo Banshee (16Mb)**

VERDICT: No problems at all. Lighting effects and so on cause no caching pauses. But then, this isn't *Quake III*.

Yes, I've got hold of a tank. It was a short-lived thing of joy.



Cranes are the cash convertors of *GTA2*.

GTA SAVES

While *Grand Theft Auto 2* isn't likely to save your soul, the churches in the cities do enable you to save your game. You can't go saving willy-nilly – it costs a hefty chunk of cash to commit your career to disc and you can't save mid-mission. The game is nervier as a result, giving at least some meaning to your lives if not those of the citizens around you.

enough to bother. Alongside the re-spray shops of the original you can also neatly kit your car out with forward firing guns and oil-layers, with hilarious consequences for cops.

As for cars, there are hundreds; and again DMA has managed to differentiate them without making any unplayable. Just

"For some reason the audio is just *too* realistic."

like in real life, you only realise how slow your last car was when you get a new one Some, such as the Yakuza and Zaibatsu sports cars, really fly. Others, like the trucks and bank vans, are better at soaking up damage. Girly cars like the lightweight Minx might impress the ladies (of which there are, curiously, none in *GTA2*) but will crumple like tin foil.

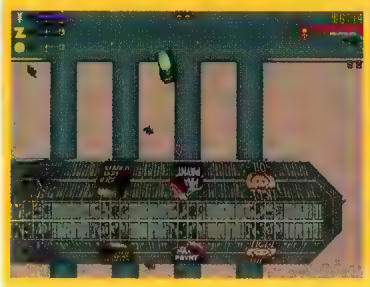
The link between music and car type which worked so well in the original is there, and remixed with the addition of local radio. As you race across the city, the music changes even when the vehicle doesn't. Instead of streaming tracks off the CD, music s now brought into the game as .wav files, enabling the PC to mix and match music and intersperse it with random outbursts from foul-mouthed DJs. It's here we start getting into the negative points, with *GTA2* looking livelier and less repetitive, but somehow *too* realistic.

More unacceptable are mission briefings given as text rather than sampled speech. Orders are only about 30 words long and a bit of muttering gangster madness would add atmosphere as well as gag potential. DMA has apparently put the PlayStation version first. Ditto the graphics while the game is graphically adequate, you can't help imagining the PC could handle those cars better as polygons than sprites.

It's also a shame that DMA didn't push the gang characterisation a little further. Individual heroes like those in the Leonardo Di Caprio remake of *Romeo and Juliet* would keep you on your toes. As it is, it still

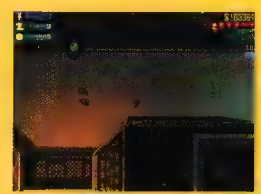
LOSE THE HOUNDS – CHANGE YOUR SMELL

It makes no sense at all that by driving in through a garage and changing your car's colour, the police lose your scent. Robbing a new car has no such benefits.

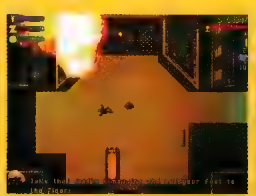


MISSION POSSIBLE (JUST): A TEN-STEP CRIME PLAN (CONTINUED)

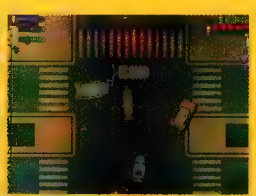
GTA2 at its most politically correct - all groups in society are represented. It's frightfully PC, you know.



6. Lance does his thing with the nice security guard whom Elmo wants to keep alive.



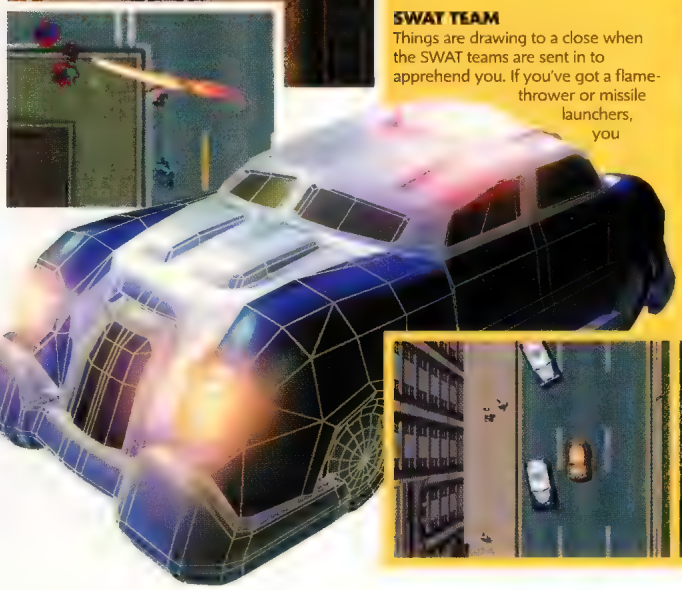
7. We 'off' the other guard then pop the door with the Molotovs. The limo drives like a gold brick.



8. "Drive carefully," advises Elmo from back at base HQ. We get smashed up in traffic.

9. Things take a turn for the worse after more run-ins with the law. Erm – the limo's... hot.

10. We toasted cars and cops and we're $40,000 richer. Only took five goes...



THE MANY ARMS OF THE LAW

BOYS IN BLUE
Do something bad, like breathe on a cop car, and your criminality level will warrant investigation by a squad car. It's relatively easy to shake them off and, with care, to return to undercover life.

ROADBLOCKS
If, instead of shaking off the cops, you accidentally ram them, steal their cars and run them over, they'll close the net. Roadblocks are pretty easy to bust through but, inevitably, your criminality rating will rise when you drive over kneeling policemen.

SWAT TEAM
Things are drawing to a close when the SWAT teams are sent in to apprehend you. If you've got a flame-thrower or missile launchers, you might hang on for a bit. It's definitely worth it to make an effort and nick a SWAT van at least once, since they drive like Torville on ice.

MULDER AND SCULLY
Uh oh. If you hear something like 'Special units on their way,' on the police frequency radio, the next thing you'll hear is the 'thwack-thwack' of the FBI's silenced Uzis. Unlike Mulder, they shoot first and they don't appear to ask questions, ever.

THE NATIONAL GUARD
If you're lucky, you'll survive long enough to be finished off by the National Guard. The streets are cleared and martial law is imposed, with jeeps and soldiers blasting at anything that moves.

feels a bit too much like 'you against the world' – it would be nice to see some neat AI versions of the player screwing things up just as spectacularly.

However, *GTA2* is more remarkable for what DMA has squeezed in rather than what it's left out. Short of cash? Grab a car and nead over to the Zaibatsu recycling works to convert it into hard currency. Wondering what those abandoned articulated trailers are for? Well, just hook them up to a truck and find out

Graphic proof that crime doesn't pay. It's fun, though.

There are three huge city areas to play through, with different gangs in each. The cities bristle with additions like a complicated prison complete with inmates, public transport systems, storm drains under the roads, ramps encouraging you to jump them and an American football game in progress (we haven't figured out why yet).

"It should have inspired a dozen clones."

Add in the seemingly endless missions and bonus levels and you've got a game you'll play for ages, although perhaps not for long in any one session. The final thrill is that it's a game you can pick up, play and put down, before going to the pub or to bed

Another thing is that we haven't spent pages worrying over the violence, because it's not an issue here. It's got its 18 certificate, but it's more likely to be a *Kingpin* or a *Carmageddon* that pushes things too far, however much *GTA2*'s publishers try to stoke up controversy. *GTA2* is a littered with corpses but they're all just straight men for laughs. Watch carefully and you'll even notice paramedics magically clean up some dead bodies with a wipe of a cloth. Little computer people don't die, however much you run them over, incinerate, crush, burst, blast or blow them up. They just get reincarnated at the top of the screen

Ultimately, *Grand Theft Auto* holds a torch for the sort of shoot-em-up, knock-em down gameplay that is increasingly rare on any machine, and particularly the PC. It's a game that should have already inspired a dozen clones but never has. For this reason alone, DMA is justified in returning to make *Grand Theft Auto* the game it could have been. Let's hope more ponderous developers get the message

Do the crime without doing the time Stealing cars has never been so much fun.

OWAIN BENNALLACK

PC GAMER PROFILE

GTA2 is .
- **Funny**
- **Filthy**
- **Still unique**

GTA2 is not.
- **A game for your gran**
- **A technology showcase**
- **A primer for serial killers**

■ Publisher **Take 2/Rockstar Games** ■ Developer **DMA** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32 Mb RAM, 80 Mb HD Space** ■ Recommended **P200, 32 Mb RAM, 80 Mb HD Space** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.take2games.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER
Effortlessly ram-raids back into our affections. Beg, borrow or steal a copy now.
90%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Driver PCG 74, 90%
Polygons aplenty, but you can't pull half the stunts you can do in *GTA*

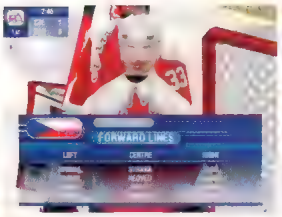
Worms Armageddon PCG 67, 90%
Turn based *GTA* without the cars. Or the legs. Look, it's there in spirit

DAILY HERALD September 4 1939.
ON YOUR FEET FOR HOURS ?
Then Don't Forget That
ZAM-BUK
Removes Pain, Soreness & Corns
No. 7349
WAR DE
BRITAIN
The Fleet Moves
PICTURE POST
PICTURE POST
9/10 The Times
"This game is nothing short of brilliant"
9/10 Edge
"Challenging, deep, acutely atmospheric!"
stealth and strategy
unique combination of action
immersive gameplay
A player co-operative network play
unparalleled war authenticity
danube
aachen
graphically varied levels
one of the most realistic looking and playable action strategy games ever
norway
germany
deep
engrossing
H&D
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS
unparalleled war authenticity
Immersive storyline through 23 diverse missions and 6 campaigns
Take control of genuine WWII vehicles including a panzer tank!
40 Different troops to select, each with their own personal traits
Game development assisted by a WWII Commander.
Force feedback support through Windows 95/98.
4 Player co-operative action over LAN-co-ordinate your strikes!
TAKE 2
TALONSOFT
ILLUSION
PC CD
TALONSOFT SOFTWARE 1999. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PUBLISHED BY TAKE TWO INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE EUROPE LTD.
www.talonsoft.com - www.take2games.com

GENRE: SPORTS

NHL 2000

EA Sports are skating on thin ice with this, their annual hockey cash-in.



(Right) Close-ups are almost frighteningly realistic.

(Below) Countless face-offs punctuate the frenzied action.

STICK IT TO 'EM

Fighting has played an ever-increasing role in EA Sports' last *NHL* offerings, and *NHL 2000* promotes a good brawl to the position of full 2D beat-'em-up. Such friction is typically caused by slamming into or slashing at your opponents with your stick. Starting a ruck elicits a close-up of the two combatants – one of whom you control. Be prepared to pay for your thuggery however, with the subsequent sentence in the sin bin. Top stuff.

PC GAMER PROFILE

NHL 2000 is:
- Very pretty
- Fast-paced
- Simple to start playing

NHL 2000 is not:
- Vastly different to *NHL 99*
- Overly challenging
- Of long-term interest

ON THE CD

AT the time of going to press, the Millennium Ferris Wheel lies scuppered on the banks of the Thames; its giant, impotent frame symbolic of a fin de siecle celebration dogged by its own over-ambition. Similarly, EA Sports' Y2K hockey offering is something of a grandiose concept turned non-event.

By releasing new versions of their sports licences too often, the improvements become harder to spot. The real question is whether the few enhancements contained here justify *NHL 2000* existing at all. Simply put, a patch for *NHL 99* that contained all the new season data would serve an almost identical purpose. To quote our review of last year's offering, it's "not a major advance over *NHL 98*". A sentence that can be used time and again by just changing the year.

Having visited the studio during the game's development, we're only too aware of the amount of work that's gone into making *NHL 2000* the 'ultimate' ice hockey game. It's almost absurdly fast on the recommended specs, and, with a joypad selected, begins to approach the sheer arcade greatness that the Sega Megadrive versions used to deliver. The hardcore simulation aspects (coaching strategies, editing player lines, three kits for each team, accurately modelled players, etc.) remain, but for every complex option, you'll find a simple alternative that lets the PC select your tactics, players and even team plays.

"Anything you could possibly desire."

EA Sports will argue that the graphics, animation, stadia, player stats, game options, and control method have all been improved – and they're right. *NHL 2000* looks gorgeous.

The animation is better than ever before, especially the crowds, and during replays – where some of the options include tournaments, playoffs, seasons, shootouts... anything you could possibly desire. The control method is intuitive – with simple speed bursts, passing, shooting, and jinks all easily executable. But – and it's a big 'but' – its feature improvements rarely represent a major advance over *NHL 99* (there's that sentence again).

We can hardly criticise EA Sports for putting out too many games, but sooner or later they'll wake up to the fact that there's only so much you can do to simulate a particular sport. Short of creating a futuristic version, complete with electrified puck, sticks with blades on the ends, and Rollerball-style violence, *NHL 2000* is as thorough as they can possibly make it, and as thorough as anybody could possibly want it to be.

What, then, for *NHL 2001*? The smart money is surely on the features listed above, accompanied by an all-new catchphrase Soon, it will simply have to read: 'Even if it isn't in the game, it's in the game.'

MATTHEW PIERCE

SYSTEM MISER

How *NHL 2000* will play on *your* PC

■ Test System **P200, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo 1 (4Mb)**

VERDICT: Turn player and stadia detail right down, and you'll find *NHL 2000's* performance to be perfectly playable.

■ Test System **PII 300, 64Mb RAM, Voodoo 2 (12Mb)**

VERDICT: Flawless in-game frame rate with full detail, but pre-game loading times are still a bit too long.

■ Publisher **EA** ■ Developer **EA Sports** ■ Price **£40** ■ Minimum System **P200, 32Mb RAM, 70Mb HD**
■ Recommended **PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 200Mb HD, 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3dfx, Direct 3D**
■ Multi-Player **Network, modem, Internet** ■ Web Address **www.easports.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

NHL 99 PCG 64 83%
The best ice hockey game of last year. Still a good budget buy.

NHL 98 PCG 50 81%
The best ice hockey game of 97, strangely enough. Less impressive these days.

PC GAMER

Not-so-jolly hockey sticks. *NHL 2000* offers too few extras to beat the budget *NHL 99*.

80%

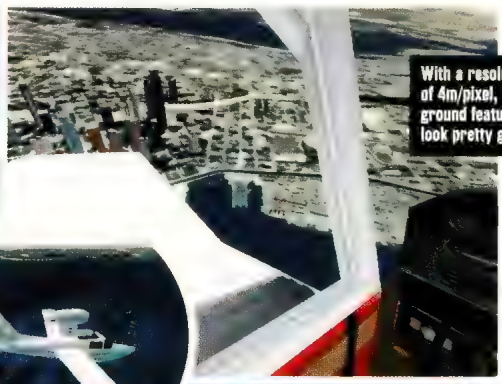
GENRE: FLIGHT SIMULATION

FLIGHT UNLIMITED 3

After recent cosmetic surgery, the *Flight Unlimited* series returns with a prettier face and bigger, fuller aerial breasts...

GAME OF DISTINCTION
PC GAMER
December 1999

Using the Stemme Motorglider you can take in the breathtaking scenery around Mt Rainier.

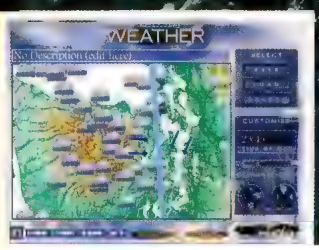


With a resolution of 4m/pixel, ground features look pretty good.

Once you've mastered landing on tarmac, why not have a go at landing on water?

FLIGHT EDITING

Extending the joys of scenery-gazing and thermal-catching, Looking Glass has also included a program called 'Fled' on the trio of Flight Unlimited discs. This powerful landscape and object editor then allows experienced *FU3*-fiddlers to add new airports and objects to the simulated world, move 3D models, beacons, taxiway lines and lights. Meanwhile, the 'Airport' option can also be used to create new in-game Challenges, which you can then swap with other fliers on the Internet. Cool.



TO play *Flight Unlimited 3* properly, it'll cost you about £5,600. That's £40 for the game and £60 for the sort of realistic yoke and rudder pedal set-up that'll mimic the mechanics of real flying. Which leaves £5,500, to be spent on a Davis DLX 650 Digital LCD Projector, allowing you to play this magnificent Looking Glass sim in true cinematic style on a conveniently poster-free wallspace. Because, let's face it, seeing a game that looks this unbelievably delicious on even a 17-inch monitor just doesn't do it justice.

Flight Unlimited 3 is three CDs of the most breathtaking flying experience you can get for a PC. Either that, or it's the most complicated interactive screensaver you will ever buy. The proof is in the install – typically a meaty 710Mb, but rising to well over 1Gb if you fully unwrap the *Flight Unlimited 3* code and add the San Francisco scenery from a copy of *Flight Unlimited 2*.

What you get for your trouble is a civilian flight sim that models 10,000 square miles around Seattle. From private airfields

"Exactly what you'd see if you were really flying."

to international airports and military bases, you can fly across a landscape that features everything from river valleys to snow-capped mountains. With a photo-realism that boasts a resolution of four metres per pixel, *Flight Unlimited 3* takes you closer to civilian aviation than any simulation to date What you see is exactly what you'd see if you were flying the journey for rea

Whatever journey you decide to take, you'll be able to fly it in one of ten different aircraft. For traditionalists, Looking Glass has included single-prop planes like the Cessna Trainer 172, Piper Arrow and Mooney TLS Bravo. The twin-prop Wind Hawk offers more power, while the Raytheon Beechjet 400A lets you test your aerial prowess with a jet-engined passenger aircraft. Off the beaten track, the Stemme Motorglider allows pilots to fly the thermals around Mt Rainier, while the Lake Renegade 270 Turbo and the Muskrat Seaplane encourage you to use every stretch of water as a landing strip

Wilder still, *FU3* owners can also take to the skies in the old WWII workhorse, the P 51 Mustang, or draw admiring glances from the ground by wrestling with a Fokker Dr1 Triplane – a replica of the Red Baron's famous WWI fighter. Other, non-flyable aircraft in the air include Boeing 737s, 747s, 757s and 777s, plus Concorde, Learjets, and even military hardware such as the F-16 Fighting Falcon and F/A 18 Hornet

With so many planes to fly and 10,000 square miles of photo-realistic Seattle to cover, you can play *Flight Unlimited 3* in several different ways. The quickstart option, dubbed simply 'Quick Flight', enables you to quickly and easily pick a plane, set a start point and get right up into overcrowded North American airspace. Here you can choose to start at any of the airports or

SYSTEM MISER

How *Flight Unlimited 3* will play on *your* PC

■ Test System **P233, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card installed**

VERDICT: Using the DirectX renderer, everything is blocky. Fortunately, the frame rate is *just* ok on low detail.

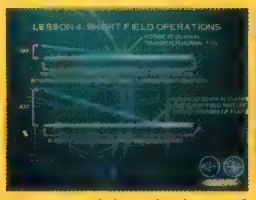
■ Test System **PII 350, 64Mb RAM, 12mb Voodoo 2**

VERDICT: The patchwork blocks are smoothed together, and frame rates remain high with detail turned up.

INSTRUCTOR IN A BOX

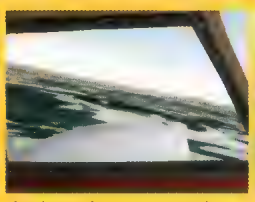
One of the most impressive features of *FU3* is the Training mode, a flight school more detailed than anything you'll have seen before.

Training addresses the basics of landing, taking off and turning, before moving on to stalls, engine failures, night-flying, instrument landing and weather training.



First you read about the theory of the topic that you want to learn more about and information is displayed as school-style blackboard scribbles.

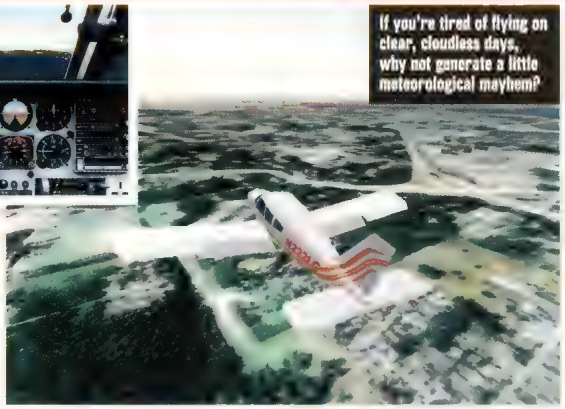
Having absorbed the theoretical aspects of Training, you can then watch as an instructor talks and shows you how to complete the selected manoeuvre.



The digitised instructor switches cockpit views, mentions control keys and talks to you as if you were sitting in the next seat. Which, in effect, you are...

Once the instructor has taken you through the manoeuvre, you can then try it out for yourself and attempt to emulate your teacher's superior skills.

Before you ask, the guns *don't* work.



If you're tired of flying on clear, cloudless days, why not generate a little meteorological mayhem?

GLORIOUS DETAIL

How detailed? Rivet-perfect aircraft fuselages, flashing landing lights and strobes, plane logos and insignia, digitised ATC chatter (in a variety of different voices), authentic flight models, realistic weather modelling, lens flare, accurate moon phases, engine failures, engine fires, fully animated control panels and electronic gizmos. That's how detailed. If only Looking Glass applied its landscaping technology and its effort into reproducing parts of the UK maybe you could admire it more.

Poetic

airfields scattered across the region, or to make things easier for yourself by starting in the air anywhere on the map

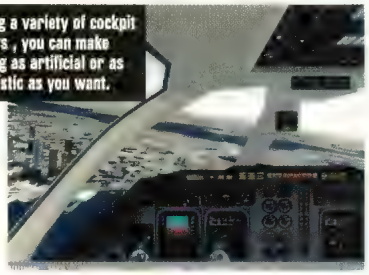
It's here, too, that you get another indication of the extraordinary detail that's gone into the game. Not only can you set weather conditions, but you can generate dynamically-evolving weather patterns Thus, the weather might be clear and cloudless when you take off, but if there's a cold front pushing in quickly from the west, it will have a dramatic effect on the entire region. From scattered cloud to raging thunderstorms, whenever you get tired of admiring the scenery (and you won't), there's more than enough meteorological mayhem to test your flying skills

The 'Airport' option goes further still, allowing you to plot a multi-waypoint flight path from A to B. Again, you can pick the plane and weather conditions, absorbing everything from realistic GPS data to local VOR info so that when the Air Traffic Controller starts jabbering in your ear, you know exactly what they're talking about There's even a Flight Recorder option, allowing you to 'tape' your aerial adventures using a number of different camera views Not to mention a staggeringly detailed Training mode, Flight Editor and a number of Challenges which dare you to pilot a local shuttle flight, or to fly around Seattle covering news stories for a TV station.

Above all else, the main appeal of the *Flight Unlimited* series is its astonishing attention to detail, and this third title is undeniably bigger and better. Where military flight sims are often harsh technology demonstrators, *Flight Unlimited 3* has a poetic grandeur to its civilian realism. It may lack the worldwide scope of some recent sims, but in simulating a chunk of the western US, Looking Glass has produced an experience that never fails to impress. Textured cityscapes give way to rolling mountains, veiled in wispy cloud; Boeing 737s queue for take-off at overcrowded airports; the briefest of keyboard touches are gentle pushes on your aircraft's brakes

More than just making *The Best Flight Sim In The World... Ever! Volume 3*, Looking Glass has pushed the civilian aerial genre so far forward, everything else has become yesterday's news. So much to say, so little space...

DEAN EVANS



Using a variety of cockpit views, you can make flying as artificial or as realistic as you want.

PC GAMER PROFILE

FU3 is...

- **The best civilian flight sim we have ever seen.**
- **Easy to use, but difficult to master.**
- **A triumph of graphics, style and design.**

FU3 is not.

- **A game with guns in.**
- **Instant, joyous and fun-packed.**
- **'Unlimited'. You can only fly around Seattle.**

■ Publisher **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer **Looking Glass** ■ Price **£40** ■ Minimum System **P233, 32 Mb RAM, x4 CD-ROM, 300Mb HD, Win 95/98** ■ Recommended **PII 350, 64Mb RAM, 3D card, 2.1Gb HD** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.lglass.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Fly! PCG75, 66%
While it doesn't impress visually, Take 2's effort can't be matched in terms of scope.

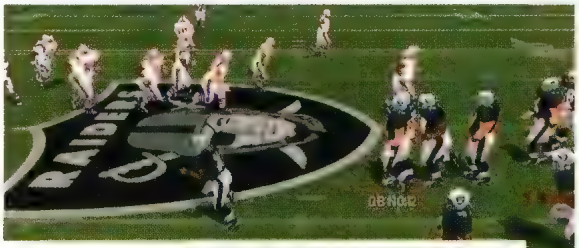
Flight Unlimited 2 PCG 53, 91%
Buy this older version of Flight Unlimited, and load the scenery into *FU3*.

PC GAMER
The best just got better. *Flight Unlimited 3* is whole course of flying lessons in one £40 box.
92%

GENRE: SPORTS

MADDEN 2000

Just when you thought Madden couldn't get any better... it doesn't.



(Top) Aren't they Statler and Waldorf from the Muppet Show?

SYSTEM MISER

How *Madden 2000* will play on *your* PC

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, No 3D card installed**

VERDICT: Pretty jerky stuff, so it's hard to target opposition runners. Surely a nightmare with just 16Mb RAM.

■ Test System **PII 266, 64Mb RAM, Voodoo 2 (12Mb)**

VERDICT: Perfectly adequate. High frame rates and smooth action all round give a satisfactory experience.

ON THE CD

Gridlock

MUCH as the former Raiders' head coach would like to be remembered for his Superbowl-winning, ABC-commentating career highs, over here he's merely synonymous with his eponymous EA Sports series. It's got so that the initial, explanatory title of *John Madden Football* has been steadily eroded until we're left with simply *'Madden'* and whatever the next year may be. We don't need to be told that his mother called him John or that it's an American football game; EA take it for granted that we know by now. Some might say EA take their audience similarly for granted but I couldn't comment.

Oh, twist my arm, then..

Madden 2000 will be familiar to anyone who purchased its last incarnation and much of it still smacks of the winning formula first arrived at on the Mega Drive some eight years back. There's nothing wrong with this as it is an undeniably excellent format, aiming for the middle ground with some tactical depth and easy arcade controls. Cosmetically, it's improved as the years have gone on, sprites replaced by the wonderful motion captured players we have now. They're a convincing lot, making you wince at the more thudding tackles and whoop with delight when you pull off a stunning catch or make a tortuous touchdown run.

"Like all its forebears, thoroughly enjoyable."

Make no mistake, *Madden 2000* is hugely entertaining True to the sport itself, last-quarter, last minute and even last second comebacks keep the tension high and the replay function busy. Special mention here must go to my fight-back in the last quarter of an AFC Championship game from 21-14 down to win 42-27, thanks to a daring two-point conversion, an interception run back for a TD and forcing a fumble in my own red zone. And if all that meant very little to you, you really are reading this review by mistake, aren't you?

Regular players of the *Maddens* will know that the one thing that stops the series from attaining true gaming greatness is the unbalanced way they play. *Madden 2000* is, sadly, no exception. On offence, rushing is far easier than passing - the array of side-steps, high-steps and dives can usually guarantee you making ten yards in three or four downs, whilst open receivers are hard to pick out and inconsistent when it comes to catching. Switch to defence and it's the other way around. It's hard to pick out the ball carrier on running plays meaning they'll normally get a few yards but, so long as you choose a decent formation, the passing game is easy to keep in check.

Madden 2000 is, like all its forebears, thoroughly enjoyable. But whilst it's easy to get caught up in it all for a few seasons it's also easy to get bored with the increasingly predictable games, leaving you hankering after a worthy human opponent.

CHRIS BUXTON

Men, hitting other men. What a beautiful game.

PCGAMER PROFILE

Madden 2000 is:

- The only gridiron game you'll need...
- ...not to mention the only one around...
- ...so thank God it's pretty damn good.

Madden 2000 is not:

- For American Football virgins
- Well-balanced enough
- Playable without an 8-button pad

■ Publisher **EA Sports** ■ Developer **Tiburon** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 16Mb RAM, 50Mb HD Space, 3D card** ■ Recommended **PII 266, 64Mb RAM, 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3dfx, Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **Network, modem, Internet** ■ Web Address **www.ea.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PCGAMER **84%**

Highly playable gridiron sim spoiled only by a few crucial tactical imbalances.

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Madden 99 PCG 64, **84%**
Last year's model, but what you lose in up-to-date additions you may gain in a cheaper price point

Front Page Sports Football 95 PCG 15, **77%**
Much less arcadey than Madden, gridiron anoraks should know that it's still updated annually in the US

GENRE: FLIGHT SIM

NATIONS FIGHTER COMMAND

World War II may not have been as exciting as we think. Here's the game to prove it.

MR BEAN

Quite why Psygnosis bothered to hire Sean Bean to record voice-over for the scene-setting film clips before the British campaign missions is anyone's guess. You can't help but feel that the money would have been better spent on a tad more time at the design stage, rather than on this cosmetic fluff.

Across the green and pleasant land of jolly old Blighty, and off to Fritz land for a spot of jerry-bashing. And other such outdated, offensive cliches.

AFTER years of neglect, the World War II flight sim has undergone something of a renaissance in the last year or so. The long-awaited *European Air War* was enjoyable if ultimately disappointing, and *World War II Fighters* was fun. Best of all, Microsoft's *Combat Flight Simulator* even made us fall in love with their habitually tedious series.

Tough competition, then, for *Nations Fighter Command*, whose remit is to let the player take part in the key moments of the war in the air for the air forces of three major powers: the USAF, Luftwaffe and the plucky old RAF. In practice, this means you have a fifteen-mission campaign for each of the three nations along with a few instant missions and, of course, a multi player option. Given its title, the international aspect would seem to be *Nation's* main gimmick – unfortunately, nobody told Psygnosis that *European Air War* and *Combat Flight Simulator* have both already done this, and done it rather well to boot

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a dashboard Cornetto. No fighter should leave base without one.

Grounded

"Not even Sean Bean can save *Nations*."

Thunder thus stolen, poor *Nations* is revealed for what it really is – a mundane WWII flight sim that not even a Sean Bean voice-over can save. For starters, the sweep of the campaigns is so broad as to make the missions feel like a disconnected 'Greatest Hits Of WWII' rather than an ongoing conflict in which you can get quite attached to your pilot or squadron and feel as if you're doing your bit for the war effort

The only upside of this disjointed approach is the variety of missions available. These range from strafing runs over the North African desert, to Battle Of Britain sorties and raids on Germany. There's some excitement to be had here, with close combat of Spitfires and Messerschmidts, and low-level Mustang attacks sometimes being a seat-of-the-pants kind of experience. When it's working properly, that is

Faced with a sky full of fighters and bombers or a convoy of ships or ground vehicles, *Nations* has trouble coping and the frame rate can drop to a worryingly low level. Just when you need a lightning-fast response, you can be almost flying blind; making survival in some missions a bit of a lottery. This is therefore certainly not a game for a lightweight shandy PC.

Nations Fighter Command is certainly pretty but, as with everything else in the game, is no improvement on its main rivals. Put *Nations*' disparate collection of World War elements together with its easily-taxed engine and you have a flight sim that, whilst not particularly bad, has not a great deal to recommend it either.

CHRIS BUXTON

PC GAMER PROFILE

Nations is
- A World War II combat flight sim
- pretending you're the RAF, USAF or the Luftwaffe
- A classic case of too little, too late

Nations is not
- The most polished piece of software
- The best World War II flight sim
- Or even the third best, unfortunately

■ Publisher **GT Interactive** ■ Developer **Psygnosis** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **PII 266, 64Mb RAM, 3D card** ■ Recommended **PII 350, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3dfx, Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **Internet, Network** ■ Web Address **www.psygnosis.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

Routine collection of World War II fighters and missions. Very little to get excited about.

65%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

World War II Fighters PCG 66, 85%
One hell of a looker, *and* fun to be with. The best of this set of triplets.

European Air War PCG 65, 80%
Too much pre-launch hype, and too many wingmen called 'Ginger'...

LOCATION: UNION CITY
DATE: DEC 31 / 1999
TIME: 23.59.56
CAMERA: UC-CAM 2

Witness the birth of...

URBAN CHAOS

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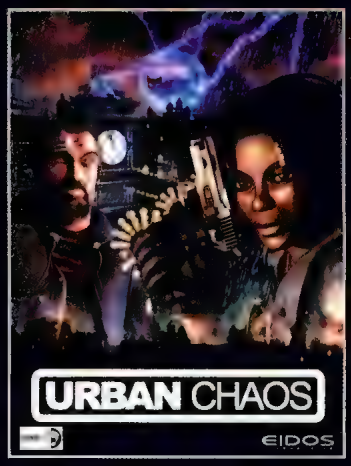
As we approach the **new millennium** *things are changing, the* **cities** *grow:*
the future of the world is the super city – the metropolis, **the future is neon bright.**

New office blocks are not just for 'suits', but a blank canvas for **graffiti artists, skateboarders,** *the* **underground** *and the* **disfranchised,** *stamping their* **personalities** *on a stale, conformist world.*

"Chaos is not mere disorder,
it is the **deep order** *within apparently random non-linear systems."*
Douglas Rushkoff

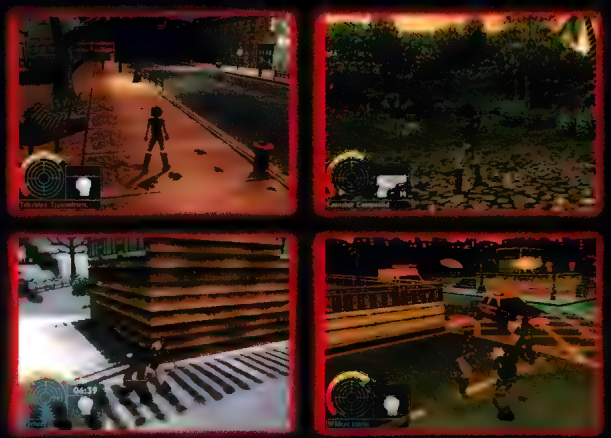
Release date: December 1999



Urban Chaos *throws you into the heart of this modern urban jungle at the turn of the* **millennium.** *To succeed you'll need a lethal combination of stealth, physical agility and martial arts skills as you interact with the city around you.* **Complete freedom** *to explore every area is granted and this freedom extends to gameplay – the future is in your hands as you are drawn into an underlying plot featuring a mysterious cult intent on evil at this unpredictable and potentially menacing millennium period.*

PC CD

PlayStation



"A genre-busting game in the truest sense"
PC Zone

"The most atmospheric environment ever seen on a computer screen" **PC Gamer**

Exclusive soundtracks from Urban Chaos are available on an album featuring:

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- *Asian Dub Foundation and Audioactive*
- *3 Jays*
- *Way out West*
- *Photek*
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- *Tour de Force*
- *Andy Hughes*

The album also features a limited edition PC demo of the Urban Chaos game.

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Save the world

SONY

How can a CD writer save the world?

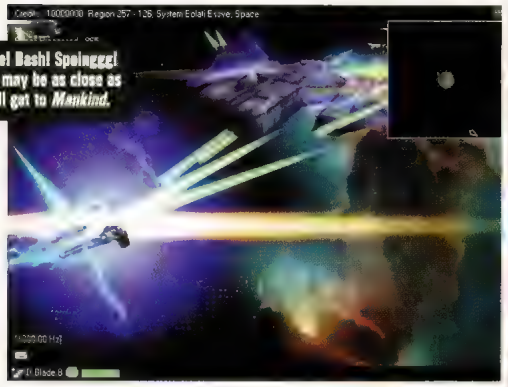
Their parents used to keep their inspiration in shoe boxes: letters, poems, photographs, sketches, ideas and memories captured on video or tape. In today's multimedia world of home studios, email and the web, more and more of our lives are digital, so they don't have to gather dust under the bed. Sony CRX Series CD-ReWritable kits come complete with audio, photo, video and backup software so you can save your ideas, your memories, your sounds and visions neatly in the CD rack.

Isn't it time you save your world with the CRX Series from Sony? www.sony-cp.com/cd-rw **Storage Solutions** by Sony

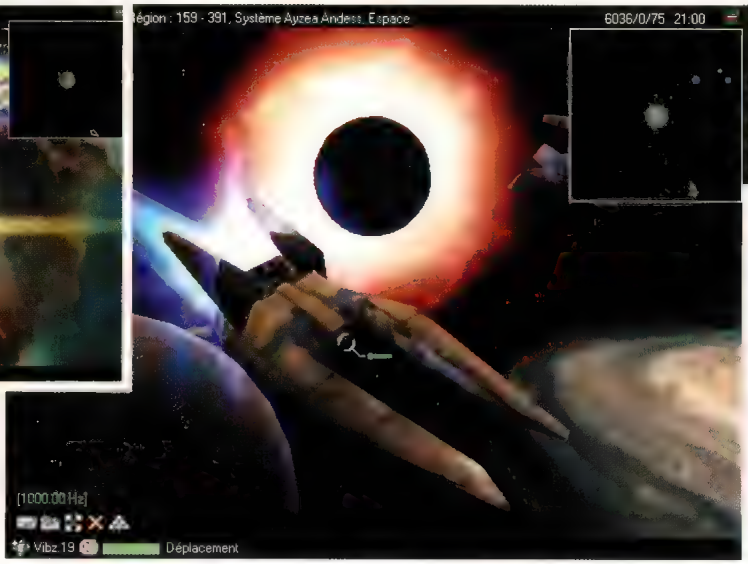
GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY

MANKIND

"Probably the biggest game in the world!" says the advert. "If it ever works," say we.



Whoa! Bash! Spoingge! This may be as close as you'll get to *Mankind*.



You should be aware that all these screenshots came from the Web site, because we couldn't figure out how to make anything interesting happen.

STILL WANT TO PLAY?

If you're still keen to give *Mankind* a go, and there really isn't anything we can do to persuade you otherwise, visit the official website at www.mankind.net At least there you can download a free version of it, saving you some cash.

THE word 'concept', in the videogames world, describes a well-annotated collection of papers, exhaustively describing the vision behind a new game. Concepts are used to get development money, and the concept behind *Mankind* is frighteningly huge: real-time strategy combined with space trading, planet conquest and huge battles, set on-line with unlimited players in a persistent and virtually limitless galaxy.

Now, with that one, the designers were really asking for trouble

We've been trying to review this damn game all year. The first boxed copy arrived way back in January, and to the best of our knowledge it's been on sale across the country ever since The problem is - and this is a problem we expect the general public is also facing - *Mankind* has never worked properly. For nine months I couldn't even register my character. This month I finally registered, accepted a four-hour download to patch the game, and then found that the server was down. At least, I think that was the problem, as it was all in

This is the kind of planetary strategy you're supposed to do.

Mangled

"I clicked again. Nothing happened."

French, and my French only goes as far as beer-requests

Finally, a few days ago, I got connected, and had my first glimpse of *Mankind*, a black emptiness. Moving the mouse around I discovered a bunch of spaceships and a few planets. I clicked Ships were highlighted. I right-clicked. A menu came up. I clicked again. Nothing happened. I kept right clicking on ships, and a mysterious message told me that I "couldn't open, as the ship is not shared". Up comes a map screen Double-clicked on a planet. Nothing happened Right clicked on it and found myself on the surface of it. Quite nicely contoured Totally empty. Found some ships. Looked like the ones in space

Right, got the manual. Badly translated Didn't tell me anything. Looks like the section that actually *tells me what to do* is missing. Bugger.

Come out of *Mankind* and go on to the Web site. Support section promises a Tutorial. Excellent. Oh, it hasn't yet been translated into English. Thanks

So what's a man to do? We've been given this game to review. If you buy it now, you'll encounter exactly the same problems, so we have to act now to tell you not to buy this game as it doesn't work. Quite clearly it's the most abortive attempt at a game we've ever witnessed. If we had to mark it today it would have to get less than 3%, the lowest mark we've ever given, since at least you can understand and play *Plumbers Don't Wear Ties*

While I have every sympathy for the non-English speakers attempting to understand our manuals, we can't conceivably be expected to figure out something as complex as *Mankind* without some kind of assistance. That it's already been in the shops for 11 months in this state is completely unforgiveable **STEVE OWEN**

PC GAMER PROFILE

Mankind is
- Utterly baffling
- Biting off more than it can chew
- A waste of nine months

Mankind is not
- A space opera
- Worth more than 3p
- Paint drying

■ Publisher **Cryo** ■ Developer **Vibes** ■ Price **£35, including one year's subscription** ■ Min **P200, 32Mb RAM, Internet connection** ■ Recommended **Another game** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct3D** ■ Multi-Player **So they say** ■ Web Address **www.mankind.net** ■ Release Date **Several months ago**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Homeworld PCG75, 78%
Deep-space RTS with fancy-looking ships and swirly battles It works, and you can play off-line Bargain

Ultima Online PCG72, 85%
Origin has got this on-line-only RPG sorted out now, but it's not in space But has trading and stuff.

PC GAMER

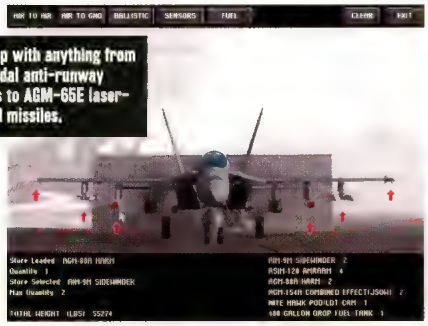
Permanently unfinished, utterly unfathomable. A waste of 11 months. Oh, and unreviewable.

N/A%

GENRE: FLIGHT SIMULATION

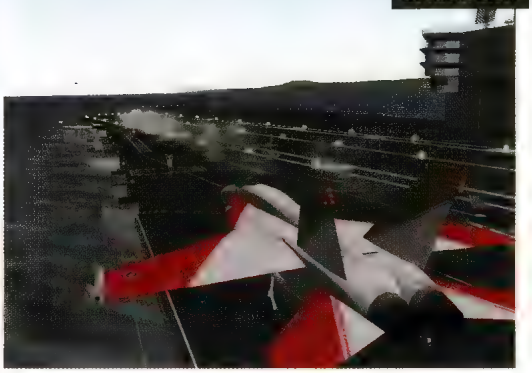
F/A-18E: SUPER HORNET

F-14? F-16? F/A-18E? If you thought flight sims offer little more than another number after the *'F'*, let *Super Hornet* convince you otherwise.



Arm up with anything from Durandal anti-runway bombs to AGM-65E laser-guided missiles.

40 missions will test pilots who want the F/A-18E experience, but a Quick Start option will offer instant fly-'n'-fight action.



An F/A-18 trainer waits its turn on the carrier deck.

CAN YOU KILL THE DECK CREW?

It's one of those questions you simply must ask. The answer is yes. While you can't shoot or bomb them, it is possible to 'accidentally' roll the tonnage of your *F/A-18E* over one of the little stick-men who run around the carrier deck. Just like a real carrier deck, the guys with the fluorescent sticks who guide the aircraft from hanger to catapult are the easiest targets.

WHILE *Super Hornet's* manual isn't of telephone directory-sized proportions, it's still weighty enough to press the creases out of a pair of trousers. There's something quite satisfying about an instruction guide that's more brick than booklet, something which suggests that *F/A-18E* isn't a game you can just pick up and get the most out of in a spare couple of minutes.

its developer, Digital Integration, is one of the few software companies that concentrate purely on flight sims, with a heritage that stretches back via *F-16s*, *Apache* and *Hind* helicopter gunships, to the ageing *Tornado*. Even though its latest sim has a hard-core heart, with impressive flight dynamics and rivet-perfect attention to detail, *F/A 18E also* boasts enough frills to impress casual and veteran flyers alike

Simulating the latest version of the US Navy's front-line air and ground-attack fighter aircraft, *F/A 18E Super Hornet* hardly puts a wing wrong. It was a measure of DI's tight design that its *Tornado* game was used by the RAF in training prospective pilots. It appears the US Navy is now doing the same thing with *F/A-18E*. They were involved in its development and are now so impressed by its realism that it sits alongside industrial simulators costing 500 times as much.

It takes millions of dollars to train today's combat pilots. Digital Integration offers everyone with a PC the chance to join the aerial elite for about £40. What you get for your money is one of the most advanced simulators currently available: 40 missions, cutting-edge weaponry, two campaign modes, realistic weather and a multi-player option for up to 24 players. An exhaustively researched flight model and realistic avionics come as standard

But *F/A-18E: Super Hornet* really impresses in three key areas. The first of these is the graphical detail. Playable in resolutions right up to 1024 by 768 pixels, this game has the capacity to suck your PC's processor dry. High-resolution textures and the tiniest details have been added to almost every area of the game.

From the missiles slung beneath the aircraft, to steam trails from the deck catapults, *Super Hornet* delivers a remarkable level of graphical eye-candy. While photo realistic landscaping has been abandoned in for painted hills, river valleys and coastlines, it has the advantage that the terrain doesn't break up into a patchwork of ugly brown and green blotches when you sweep low to attack a convoy of tanks

The interactive, fully-functional flight deck is the most appealing feature.

As an air-to-air interceptor and ground-attack aircraft, variety of mission types means flying is rarely dull.

Tough

As long as you've got a fast PC, a 3D accelerator card and plenty of free RAM, *Super Hornet* looks magnificent Remember, though, that a cutting-edge game requires cutting-edge technology. While you can flick various visual options on and off to suit your PC's specification, the slower beige box you have, the jerkier *Super Hornet's* gameworld becomes

Another part of this lavish attention to detail is its fully interactive carrier deck. Now, instead of quickly launching your *F/A-18E* towards the first waypoint, you get the opportunity to start your mission the way a real pilot would. Wait your turn as other *F/A-18's* are catapulted off the deck, then power up the aircraft's engines and roll it slowly towards the take-off point. Deck crews scurry about, checking the *F/A-18's* connection to the steam catapult or guiding the aircraft forward with hand-signals

All the while, the carrier's Air Traffic Control is in constant contact, telling you

"Start your mission like a real pilot."

when to power your engines, and finally when to kick in the afterburners so that you go screaming off the carrier deck in a cloud of boiling steam. The incredible, breathtaking realism of being on the carrier deck is so overwhelming, you almost don't want to leave. It's a pleasure just switching to one of *Super Hornet's* many external camera views so you can pan around watching the action at your leisure. You won't have seen or experienced anything quite like it on a flight sim before

If the interactive carrier deck is good, so is the 3D virtual cockpit. In most sims, the virtual mode is barely used, a cosmetic view from the window that's limited in battle situations as you can't read the displays clearly or access them. *Super Hornet's 3D* cockpit fixes both of these problems, presenting a brilliantly realised, fully interactive instrument panel with fully functioning switches, displays and buttons

Featuring HOTAS (Hands On Throttle And Stick) support, the virtual cockpit takes 3D realism to a higher level, allowing pilots to adjust and even zoom into MFD displays; and to even abandon the traditional 2D view altogether. It's an excellent feature and one that, alongside the training missions, two campaigns (Barents Sea and Indian Ocean), and detailed wingman control options, make *Super Hornet* one of the most innovative sims that we've seen this year

With so many plus points, it's difficult to spot any weaknesses. A Top Gun-style intro sequence, blending live action footage with CG-backdrops, reminds you that *Super Hornet's* realism is tempered by fun and gameplay that, while frighteningly authentic, is still accessible to novice flyers. Multi-player madness can be enjoyed by up to 24 players, while single-missions vary from desperate one-on-one dogfights, to extended sorties combining the best of both air- and ground-attack action

It's a pity that the detail lavished on the both the realism and the graphics isn't matched by the depth of the campaign structure. However, come the New Year, DI plans to release *F/A 18E Super Hornet Gold*, which, with its dynamically-evolving campaigns and squadron command opportunities, makes any whingeing seem a fraction ungrateful

DEAN EVANS

PC GAMER PROFILE

Super Hornet is:

- A triumph of realism, action and 3D graphics.
- Innovative: check out the interactive carrier deck.
- Even more innovative: see that fully-functional 3D cockpit.

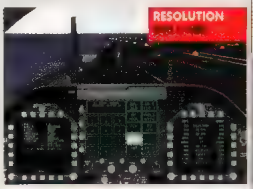
Super Hornet is not:

- Arcade-orientated.
- Easy to grasp.
- Blessed with a neatly evolving campaign structure.

SYSTEM MISER

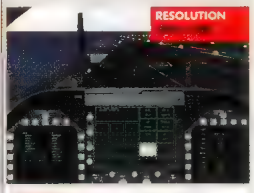
How *FA/18E: Super Hornet* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P200, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo I (4Mb))**



VERDICT: Turn off the graphical options, and it'll just run on this machine, but with a poor frame rate.

■ Test System **PIII 500, 128Mb RAM, TNT2 (32Mb)**



VERDICT: At top res, with all the options on, this machine will just about reach a perfect frame rate.

■ Publisher **Titus** ■ Developer **Digital Integration** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P200, 64 Mb RAM, 3D card, 250Mb HD Space** ■ Recommended **PIII, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-player **Internet, network** ■ Web Address **www.titus games.com** ■ Release date **Out Now**

PC GAMER

Hard to fault, and buoyed by the versatility of the F/A-18 and all the extras they've thrown in.

90%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

F-22 Lightning III PCG 73, 89%
If you're looking for something a touch more forgiving and 'arcadey', you won't go wrong here

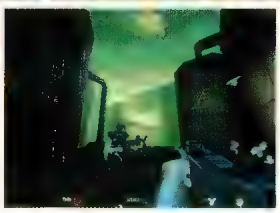
MiG Alley PCG 74, 91%
The ultimate in air attack combat The speed of jet fighting, with all the fun of 1950's planes

GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

MORTYR

"Who do you think you are kidding Mr *Mortyr*, if you think this game is good?"

(Main) "Oi, Adolf, catch..." (Left) Ooh! Nice reflections.



THEY'RE BEHIND YOU!

Thanks to *Mortyr's* thoroughly annoying penchant for spawning enemies directly behind you, it's imperative that you adopt a state of perpetual agitation in order to survive. When entering a new area, it's prudent to turn around and look directly behind you every few seconds, for fear of a fresh batch of Nazi swines turning up to stab you in the back. Literally.

PC GAMER PROFILE

Mortyr is
- Horribly frustrating
- Good-looking, but...
- Extremely shallow

Mortyr is not:
- *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*
- Bug-free
- Much fun in any sense

JUST for a second, we thought Mirage Media had done it and managed to beat Id Software to their birthright next-generation Nazi game. Our very own Spy recently revealed how rival developers have been fighting amongst themselves to win the coveted *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* project, and, while they did so, Polish-based Mirage were busy creating their own version. *Mortyr*, you see, is unashamedly *Wolfenstein 3D* in inspiration. A first-person shooter that eschews monsters and aliens in favour of the hun, while weaving a cunning time travel thread throughout the story-line that ultimately results in our hero travelling from 1944 to 2093.

As Mottie would say, it's a game of two halves. You begin proceedings in a vast, exquisitely modelled cathedral, which boasts textures of such detail you will be almost blinded by *Mortyr's* beauty. Stained glass windows, floor tiles, and works of art have been lovingly reproduced. Sadly though, *Mortyr's* fundamental faults soon overshadow the high-res aesthetics.

Bad baddies and weak weapons.

Mortifying

"Faults soon overshadow the high-res aesthetics."

Enemy soldiers are laughably animated – appearing to have graduated from *Wolfenstein's* class of '92. The weapons also pack no discernible power, and the game engine's speed fluctuates dramatically depending on how many polygons it's attempting to draw at any one time

Even more unforgiveable, though, is the rebellious nature of your crosshair, which has a mind of its own and flits erratically around the screen at random. You *can* turn this 'auto-aim' feature off, but you shouldn't *really* have to visit the 'Troubleshooting' section of the Polish web site in order to hunt down the console command to achieve it.

Although assured by the publisher that we were looking at a review version of the game, progressing through the first level required crouching and crawling *through* solid metal grates. The game also crashed regularly while loading new levels Disappearing scenery, rain falling through stone ceilings, and other, similarly amateurish faux pas litter the game, but the real ire must be saved for *Mortyr's* insistence on sticking to horrendously formulaic first-person techniques. Gold and silver keys (remember them?) must be found to open certain doors. When you do finally shoot the relevant key holding guard, the resulting icon is (you guessed it), bigger than the corpse it came from.

We're saving the best 'til last, though, for, in what can only be thought of as an homage to the 3D shooters of yore (which they surely didn't include on purpose), *Mortyr* is cursed with invisible enemy syndrome. Think you've killed every enemy in the room? Think again. Nazis are liable to materialise from nowhere as soon as your back is turned – making a mockery of methodically securing areas

In truth, *Mortyr* was probably doomed to obscurity from its inception. A small, relatively unknown developer winning fame and fortune off the back of a Nazi-themed first person shooter? Nah. Never happen.

MATTHEW PIERCE

■ Publisher **HD Interactive** ■ Developer **Mirage Media** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P200, 32Mb RAM, 50 Mb HD Space** ■ Recommended **PII 266, 64MB RAM, 490 Mb HD Space, 8Mb 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3dfx, Direct 3D** ■ Web Address **www.mirage.com.pl** ■ Release Date **TBC**

PC GAMER

It's a waste of hard disk space, and criminally bugged to boot. Hardly a fitting tribute.

45%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Wolfenstein 3D Pre-PC GAMER
Classic Nazi-bashing from Carmack and Co. We've come a long way in seven years

Half-Life PCG 63 96%
As good as first-person shooting gets. If you don't have it, get it. If you do have it, buy it again.

GENRE: ROLE PLAYING

REVENANT

Diablo meets Japanese RPGs and they become firm friends. The End.

PROTECTION

Developers Cinematix seem to have an armour fetish. Each suit has five different pieces, and there are scores of different types, from simple cloth to magical plate mail. Cinematix reckon there are a potential 33,554,432 combinations of armour, and each is reflected in your character's appearance. Mentalists.

(Left) Fancy coloured lighting makes some areas seriously atmospheric.

Thankfully, most beasties aren't this fearsome.

OR is it? *Revenant* is a strange chimera of an RPG set firmly in the Japanese mould, allowing no character choice and not a great deal of character progression. The story-line is very linear, and your character's attitudes are pre-set, allowing no real choices in dialogue or action. So why, considering all these apparent criticisms, have I awarded it the mighty score you'll find in the bottom right corner?

Let's start at the beginning.

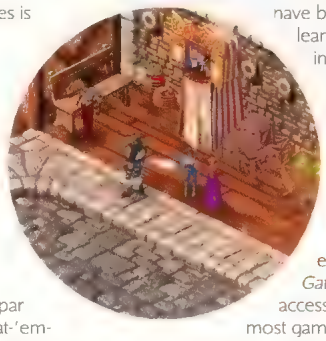
You control the titular Revenant, a warrior brought back from the dead to rescue a fair maiden and rid the world of some evil cult or other. No *Baldur's Gate*-style politics here, then. You're also pretty limited in terms of where you can go; and for the first few hours it's a case of 'get object x to get to area y', and so on.

So far, so average. But *Revenant* has a number of redeeming features. Firstly, the visuals. While it sticks to the traditional *Diablo*-esque isometric viewpoint, *Revenant* uses the kind of coloured lighting you'd normally only expect from a first-person shooter. The animation of characters and creatures is also superbly entertaining.

Awake

"Combat owes more to *Tekken*."

Secondly, the combat system owes more to *Tekken* than it does to *Diablo*. Combinations of key presses (combined with distance from your target) allow a fantastic variety of offensive moves on a par with most console beat-'em-ups. Using a cunning 'fatigue' bar along with the more traditional health and mana levels, *Revenant* demands that you fight tactically. keep pummelling away and you'll get too tired to continue, leaving yourself open for reprise attacks



Best of all, though, new attacks are gradually learned from the town's resident martial artist. Every two levels you gain (through experience points), you qualify to learn a new attack, which is then unlocked. Similarly, new spells can be learned and used once relevant scrolls and talismans have been found *Revenant's* learning curve and, more importantly, reward curve are ideally judged, making it a pretty addictive experience. That said, it's possibly a mite too easy: you'll rarely get killed and there aren't many puzzles or traps that'll really fox you.

A less beardy experience than *Baldur's Gate*, and considerably more accessible and entertaining than most games of its type; *Revenant's* combat system in particular deserves attention from anyone who's thinking of making an RPG. Or even buying one

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMER PROFILE

Revenant is
- An RPG with no character choices
- Fantastic to look at
- Blessed with great combat

Revenant is not.
- Full of decision-making
- Difficult to get into
- Difficult

SYSTEM MISER

How *Revenant* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P200, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card**

VERDICT: Pretty painful stuff. The software engine works okay, though, and there are plenty of options to turn off, so it's *just* playable.

■ Test System **PII 400, 64Mb RAM, 12Mb Voodoo2**

VERDICT: Mostly perfect, but some complex lighting sequences (spells, etc) can lead to jerkiness. Never less than 8-10 fps, though.

■ Publisher **Eidos** ■ Developer **Cinematix** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P233, 32Mb RAM, x8 CD-ROM** ■ Recommended System **PII 266, 64Mb RAM, 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-player **Internet, modem, network, serial** ■ Web Address **www.cinematix.com** ■ Release Date **Late October**

PC GAMER

Beautiful RPG with a combat system to die for – but some may not find it challenging enough.

82%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Baldur's Gate PCG 65, 89%
Epic RPG based on AD&D, parties of six in orgy of blood and magic shocker.

Darkstone PCG 75, 76%
Similarly good looking, but lacking in plot and setting refinements.

SEGA PC
SEGA RALLY 2
SEGA RALLY
CHAMPIONSHIP
BOX FILE

Now the realism of the legendary arcade game can be brought to life on your PC!

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Push 18 different cars to their limit in the 10 Year Championship or in classic Arcade style races.

Challenge drivers from around the globe using Sega's Rally Global Net Ranking, or take them on in your living room via split screen or network modes.

Not really a spectator sport!

SEGA™

empire

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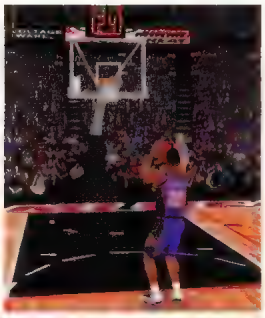
GENRE: SPORTS

NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2000

This won't be inside your drive for long.



ON THE CD

THE ancient *NBA Jam* series from Acclaim remains the best attempt at basketball on the PC. Fast and exciting, it was totally unrealistic yet felt absolutely *right*. It was how we all imagined basketball to be – even though the over-the-top physics and two-on-two arcade action was about as close to the NBA as it was to WWF. More serious efforts at replicating the on-court action have been compromised affairs, high on 'realistic' features, low on balanced, enjoyable gameplay. Sadly, ***NBA Inside Drive 2000*** **is no exception.**

Hoopless

"Annoying and not the least bit intuitive."

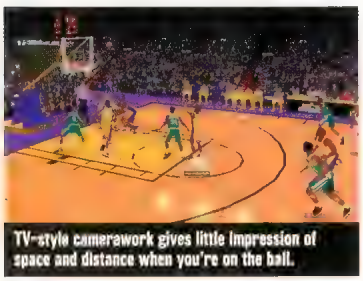
On paper, it looks impressive *NBA ID2K* has stats models for every player, styles for individual teams, a button hungry array of controls, a huge number of motion-captured moves, spectacular slam dunks, and a pair of commentators with a vocabulary so byzantine they belong on Call My Bluff. Yes, if great sports sims were all about ticking items off on some monster checklist then *NBA ID2K* would have the court to itself. They're not though, are they, and rightly so. No matter what the sport, we want to feel we're competing with the best when we play, and not reproduce the oafish performances in PE classes that we'd all rather forget. We want to be able to take the sport sim in question, think "I'd like to do that particular move," and then, after a little practice, be able to do it

NBA ID2K's problems start with its view of the action. The just-like-on TV look may pull people in but the court feels horribly compressed width-wise (in height on screen). This makes it very hard to know if your lane is blocked, or see where you can go around a player or make a pass. As this is pretty fundamental in basketball, it does make it hard to play in any way other than taking your man all the way through from one end to the other. This fault alone is enough to make playing *NBA ID2K* a frustrating experience

On top of this, the multi-button controls, while seeming to offer many ways to skin a chicken, only serve to confuse matters. Some actions rarely work, leaving you dabbing away at the button vainly hoping you might nick the ball. Shooting uses the regrettably standard two-push system, which feels annoying and not the least bit intuitive. This is maybe because I've been spoiled by the slickness of *FIFA* and *Madden* of late

NBA ID2K has some of the speed and surface style of the real NBA but feels as much of a technical exercise as it does a game, making it one only for those desperate to live out their hoop dreams

CHRIS BUXTON



TV-style camerawork gives little impression of space and distance when you're on the ball.

PC OR NOT PC?

NBA ID2K's music is by Spearhead, a hip-hop/rap combo founded by Michael Franti, previously of the incredibly right-on Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy. So, the man who rapped Television: The Drug Of The Nation and Burn Hollywood Burn has done the music for a Microsoft game. Well, if The Sex Pistols could reform...

PC GAMER PROFILE

NBA ID2K is
- Fully licensed-up
- Glossily produced
- Bursting with details

NBA ID2K is not
- A fair representation of basketball
- The best of its kind
- The worst of its kind

■ Publisher **Microsoft** ■ Developer **High Voltage** ■ Price **£20** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb RAM, 90Mb HD space** ■ Recommended **P266, 64Mb RAM, 3D card, 150Mb HD space** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.microsoft.com/sports/** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

Basketball sim that has all the right moves but little of the right stuff. Best left on the bench.

67%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

NBA Live 99 PCG 66, 72%
Fun but flawed, with set plays guaranteeing success. The usual EA Sports presentation panache

NBA Action 98 PCG 55, 70%
As you'd expect from Sega, this is quite arcadey but still has plenty of scope for different tactics

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GENRE: TURN-BASED STRATEGY

WARHAMMER 40,000: RITES OF WAR

Warhammer 40,000 admits responsibility for computer game massacre.

Players of *Panzer General* will be familiar with the 'predicted odds' prior to battle.

(Above) A unit encyclopedia keeps those unfamiliar with the setting up to speed.

Short ranges mean that you spend most of your time moving around in a big cluster.

KILL THEM ALL

Except for Single Entities, each unit represents a squad of about 15 troops. Damage inflicted is divided into wounds and kills. Kills are lost for the duration of the scenario, but all wounded troops are restored to full strength if they rest for a turn. If you do the full 15 points of damage – wounds or kills, then the unit will evaporate, never to return.

PC GAMER PROFILE

Rites Of War is

- Warhammer 40,000 without all that fiddly painting
- Turn and hex based
- *Panzer General II* in disguise

Rites Of War is not

- A new game design
- Challenging enough through the latter half of the campaign
- Right

THERE'S no denying the potential of the Warhammer universe to provide a compelling backdrop to a computer game. So far, however, it's been a case of near misses rather than hits, with the likes of *Dark Omen* and *Chaos Gate* showing heaps of promise, but ultimately falling short of the expectations of followers of the tabletop games.

Rites of War plunges straight into this abyss as well, and for blindingly obvious reasons. Like *Chaos Gate*, it's hampered by an ageing engine. It's as if SSI are trying to squeeze mileage out of the *Warhammer* licence without designing new games *Chaos Gate* was an adaption of the *Soldiers at War* engine while this time round it's the *Panzer General II* engine that gets thrown into the warp

This leaves you with a turn and hex-based strategy game, lifted straight from the wargaming mould Before you get too depressed, it does retain the accessibility and simplicity that the *5-Star General* series was renowned for. They've polished the interface with some Warhammer chrome and, once again, it looks quite promising What's particularly refreshing is that the campaign game is based around the Eldar, futuristic descendants of elves, who find themselves head to head against both the Imperium (humans) and Tyranids (Giger-esque aliens). Stand-alone scenarios are also provided with the opportunity to control the other races involved. The campaign covers more than twenty scenarios, following a linear path, with victory hexes the most common objective. There are some interesting twists and variations though, such as assassination scenarios

"Hampered by an ageing engine."

Units, which are tidily animated, represent squads, or single entities in the case of Warlocks and the like These are out of scale with the landscape, and each other, – which would be forgivable if the game was more rewarding – which it isn't. Units gain experience and pick up artefacts throughout the campaign which confer benefits, eventually reaching Exarch status, but the enemy doesn't grow enough in strength to challenge your veterans.

This is compounded by poor AI. The demands of the combat system mean you should always wipe wounded units out, otherwise they retreat and rest, then return at near-full strength. This makes for simple tactics· concentrate your troops and your fire. The computer fails to obey this simple, so, despite inflicting plenty of damage, it leaves you relatively unscathed

What could have been a great strategy title is little more than a little light relief, which only the most devoted Warhammer fans will put up with. **JASON WESTON**

■ Publisher **SSI** ■ Developer **Dreamforge** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb RAM, 184Mb HD** ■ Recommended **P233, 64Mb RAM, 333Mb HD** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-player **Up to 4 on LAN, Internet, modem** ■ Web Address **www.ritesofwar.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

Time to buy an 8 x 4ft table and paint it green. Could offer much more tactical depth.

65%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Chaos Gate PCG 67, 80%
More turn-based strategy at individual troop level, with Space Marines vs Chaos.

Dark Omen PCG 54, 75%
Sequel to *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* offering fantasy real-time strategy.

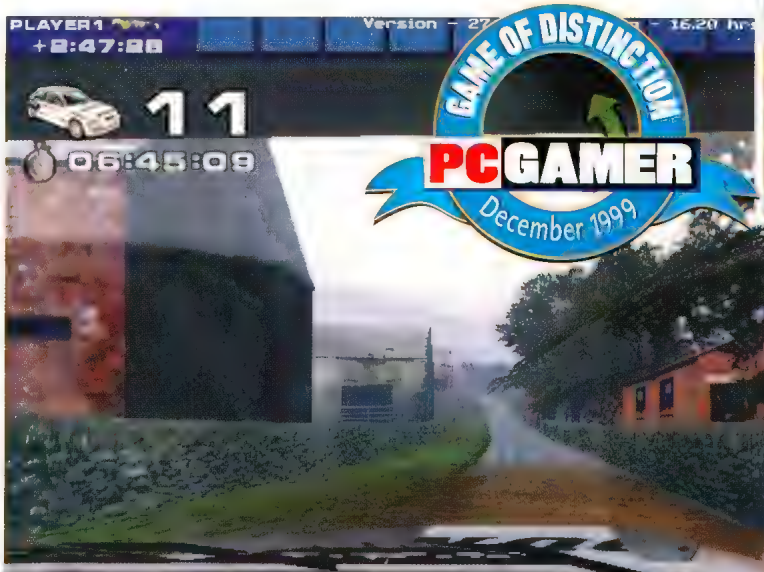
GENRE: RACING: SIMULATION

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

If you want to know how to Impreza a lady, you've got to learn how to Puma. Sorry.

HANG ON

If our database of game reviews had a brain then it would be very confused by now. (Fortunately it doesn't have a brain, because it's just scruffy notes bound together with old string.) What would puzzle it would be the fact that the first of Magnetic Fields' games for Europress was also called *Rally Championship*. Then came *Network Q RAC Rally Championship*, and then the uniquely titled *International Rally Championship*. Some of them also did *Kikstart I* and *II* on the Commodore 64. All hail.



GAME OF DISTINCTION
PC GAMER
December 1999

(Left) With a good PC and all the options on, *Rally Championship* is nothing short of utterly gorgeous.

Get used to this view. Just like any driving simulation, it can get a little frustrating at first.

FORMULA One may get all the laydeez, but there's something endlessly exciting about rally driving. Just watch it on Grandstand. Go on. Enjoy the in-car camera as a modified road vehicle tears along a muddy road barely wider than a bridle path at 80 mph. On one side is a steep bank – clip it and you turn the car upside down. On the other side is a ditch, and some large rocks buried in the long grass. Hit those and that's the wheels and suspension buggered. You thought there was no room for error in Formula One, but in rallying every second counts as well, and you've got absolutely no traction.

The signature move of your standard rally game is the power-slide, a technique that Japanese gamers go mental for, apparently, and it's found its way into almost every arcade driving game. The technique involves deliberately sending the back end round by briefly applying the brake and turning hard (which slows the front wheels and gets them pointing in another direction). Since the rear wheels still have all the momentum they throw the car round to point into the corner

"Section times tumble as you find the best set-up."

Opening out the throttle then applies ground-churning power through these rear wheels, while turning the steering wheel in the opposite direction stops the car from spinning all the way around. Power sliding is

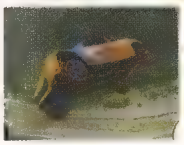
SPEED FREAKS

We're particularly interested in the simulation Championship mode, naturally. After all, that's where the real depth of the game is, and Magnetic Fields have worked so hard to make it as accurate as possible.

But, for the championshiply-challenged, there's also the obligatory arcade mode, with slightly easier handling, reduced damage, automatic set-ups and, perhaps most interestingly for some people, some other cars to race against. Proper cars, too, that get in the way and crash right in front of you. The tracks are reversed versions of the ones in the championship so even they seem new. To proceed to the next region you have to overtake every single computer car over the six stages, which ain't easy. Nice one, guys, cos this doesn't feel like a last minute idea just bolted on.

Ahhhh, a relaxing drive through the countryside, complete with sunbeams breaking through the leaves of the trees. "Danger, gate, 100!" Bugger.

Windscreen wipers are pretty essential.



WHEEL I NEVER

Don't have a steering wheel? OK, we know they're expensive, but if you really want to enjoy the likes of *TOCA 2*, *Driver* and *Rally Championship*, get yourself a Force Feedback steering wheel. Sure enough, we gave this a go with the keys and it's not the easiest game in the world. So, buy yourself a wheel. If not for us, do it for the orphanage.

Gripping

essential for getting around corners with the minimum of speed loss, and only really works on loose surfaces.

Which, of course, makes it ideal for rallying. The difference between power-sliding a corner just right and slowing down to steer round it as if you were taking your driving test is probably around five seconds, and when rally stages are some 10 to 30 miles in length over some of the twistiest, snakiest roads and dirt tracks the sick minds of the course organisers can find, learning this technique is essential

Sure enough, this is the skill you need in *Rally Championship*. This is a driving simulation as accomplished and complete as *Grand Prix 2* and *TOCA 2*, and a game so beautifully designed that it could, by rights, be the sequel to *Colin McRae Rally*. Only that's coming next year. And will probably be very good too.

It's not a complete evolutionary step beyond *Colin McRae*, though. It has the rights to the British Rally Championship, which means that the game models a hugely impressive 420 or so miles of genuine courses, split over six rallies, each of six stages. It's hugely exciting and challenging to be racing through accurately recreated countryside, but you have to wonder if *Colin McRae's* invented-world tracks aren't a little more varied than the endless British countryside

Stop for a while, and enjoy the sunset.

That's not to say that the 420 miles are identical. You'll be racing in day and night, morning and dusk, sunshine, rain, post-rain and snow, across gravel, tarmac, grass, mud and, well, snow; past farm-houses, around

SYSTEM MISER

How *Rally Championship* will play on *your* PC

■ Test System **P200, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo (4Mb)**

VERDICT: Too sluggish really, although it is possible to play. Skipping can ruin your stage times.

■ Test System **PII 300, 64Mb RAM, Voodoo 2 (12Mb)**

VERDICT: Mostly perfect – fast and comfortable, and still good looking. Perhaps a few more MHz would help.

DEAD RINGER

The voice of your co-driver is none other than Derek Ringer, partner in grime to Gwyndaf Efans. Which, if you watch rallying, is quite a famous name. Our sincere apologies to the Ringer family if the title of this note scared you.

(Right) Like in *CMR*, you'll get a visual as well as aural prompt about upcoming corners.

IS THIS MY GOOD SIDE?

Satellite imagery? Official survey data from Her Majesty appointed map-makers? Forget it. Magnetic Fields knows how to make accurate routes of the British Rally Championship. For starters, you get the rights to the official Ordnance Survey maps. Plot the course on copies of it for the in-car display, and then go and drive all 420 miles of the rally. From the video tapes you made, reconstruct the entire route, adding artistic flair and some hidden shortcuts for a laugh. That's the Chicago way. Only, Magnetic Fields are based in Chester.

coasts, through forests, over fields, under bridges and through water. Britain has a varied landscape, but you sometimes hanker for the blind separation of *McRae's* Malaysia, Sweden and Greece.

The Championship rights do bring an impressive array of vehicles to the table, though. From the low-powered A5 class Ford Puma, through the A6 of the Citroen Saxo, the more powerful A7 of the Seat Ibiza, and even the World Rally Championship A8 cars, including the gorgeous Subaru Impreza. There are 23 cars in all, each with detailed information and reference photos for your pre-championship research.

Each handles and sounds distinct, and this is where *Rally Championship* had to get it right. In order to compete with *Colin McRae* on budget, this game has to handle perfectly, and, thankfully, it does. The steering is delicate enough to make minor adjustments without the car getting too twitchy and out of shape. Braking is strong, and deliberately bringing the brake balance forwards can ensure that the back end follows round. You really can watch your section times tumble as you find the set-up that suits you best.

But the real improvement over *Colin McRae* is the stunning graphics. Despite the high-resolution textures and the incredible view distance (there's absolutely no visible draw-in) it runs comfortably on a modest PC. Start throwing in the special effects, such as the rain and snow, and you can't fail to be impressed.

It's a vast game, and you can certainly feel the extra miles over *Colin McRae*. With some sectors taking over 15 minutes to drive, you know you have to rely on the pace notes of your co-driver, and there's a definite thrill in keeping the accelerator pedal down, even though you really haven't got a clue what's coming next. Imagine doing 120 mph down a narrow lane in the dark, your headlights unable to pierce enough of the dark to even cover your stopping distance. "Hairpin, right, 200," says your co-driver, but you know you can push that little bit more before you have to hit the brakes. Slicing off that extra second from any sector is what'll separate you from the 15 computer-controlled opponents.

"There's a thrill in keeping the pedal down."

Then there's the strategy of *how* to drive. You can push for time at the risk of damaging your car or engine, but at each service stop you have just 30-60 minutes to fix your car up. Sometimes you just have to gingerly drive the sector to ensure that you get *some* points.

Yep, rallying is an excellent motorsport and Magnetic Fields have done an exemplary job in recreating it in *Rally Championship*. They've even spoiled us with the multi-player options – eight across a network and (theoretically) the Internet, two-player split screen, or hot-seat play on a single PC.

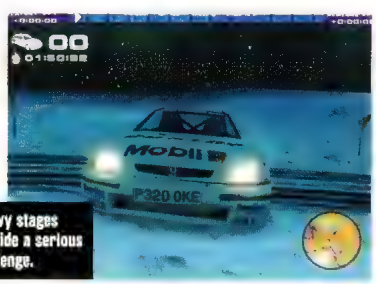
It's a fantastic driving experience, but a slightly chillier one without a steering wheel. We tried it with a joypad and the keyboard and it loses a certain proportion of its entertainment. We urge you to invest in a Force Feedback steering wheel, then feel the thrill of churning some farmer's field to a ploughed mess. Fantastic.

STEVE OWEN

PCGAMER PROFILE

Rally Championship is:
- An astonishing driving experience
- A long term investment
- Officially licensed

Rally Championship is not:
- Easily conquered
- Beaten without using the brake
- Easily conquered with just keys



Snowy stages provide a serious challenge.

Beware unfriendly villagers, who turn signs round. (Not really).

■ Publisher **Actualize** ■ Developer **Magnetic Fields** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P200, 32Mb RAM, 3D card** ■ Recommended **PII 300** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct3D** ■ Multi-Player **LAN, Internet, modem, split-screen, hotseat** ■ Web Address **www.rallychampionship.co.uk** ■ Release Date **November**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Colin McRae Rally PCG 62, 92%
Now that this is available for £13 you would be an absolute gibbon not to buy it.

TOCA Touring Car 2 PCG66, 92%
The more time you give this game the more it rewards. The PC's best for driving.

PCGAMER

A fundamentally superb driving game, and an almost perfect rally experience.

91%

Clause N° 5: The Contra
with the contractual agreement

Clause N° 6: Any amendment to contract N° 666
to be signed only with the contractor's blood.

Clause N° 7: All insurance covering the contractor
beyond the 7th life becomes null and void.

MEPHISTO
Beneficiary

faust
Contractor

What price for your soul?

FAUST

Faust. The game where myth becomes reality
and your soul is subject to contract.

arxel tribe

www.cryo-interactive.com/faust

PC CD

cryo INTERACTIVE

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Tel: 01926 315552 Fax: 01926 335460 Website: www.cryo-interactive.com

GENRE: WARGAME

NAPOLEON 1813

Can the delights of both strategic and tactical wargaming be shoehorned into a single box?

OBEY ME

Napoleon 1813 has some great features to simulate the problems entailed with commanding large forces. As head of the army you have a stack of subordinate commanders. They each have their own attributes which determine whether and how effectively they follow your orders. You also can set up the rules so that orders are delayed in reaching commanders based on the location of your central headquarters.

PCGAMER PROFILE

Napoleon 1813 is:
- Two for the price of one
- A refreshing take on Napoleonics
- Sadly lacking a multi-player mode.

Napoleon 1813 is not:
- The smartest opponent
- What we had wished for
- The last we'll hear from the Wargamer series

Not the greatest animations, but you can tell formation and unit type easily enough, which are the main concerns.

Most of your time is spent here, in the Strategic game, poring over the maps and plotting movements.

AS small boys we believed in wishes, convinced that some mysterious power was at work and that, if we wanted something bad enough, it would appear in a gift-wrapped box on a wintry Christmas morn. The harsh realities of life soon taught us that for every 'gift-wrapped box', there is an equal and opposite 'crushing disappointment', but that doesn't prevent those occasions when we once again fall victim to our childhood beliefs.

Napoleon 1813 promised to be the 'stuff of dreams' and, oh, how we were beguiled. From previews to press releases, it shone like a wargaming panacea and we wished for the promise to be realised. The promise of a wargame that runs in real time, or turn based; that offers grand strategy across nations and tactical battlefield decision making; that offers historica authenticity and fun... Surely it's 'cue the crushing disappointment line'

Not just yet, because *Napoleon 1813* delivers on many of its promises. The game provides a refreshing backdrop, avoiding the much-overused Waterloo arena and instead offering the aftermath of Napoleon's Russian campaign. The strategic map covers central Europe, focusing on the German states. You can take control of either side in any of a small group of campaign games, of which the most appealing is the Grand campaign, covering 1813-14. The Strategic game takes place in real time, with a slider bar to adjust speed, though the game can be frozen and orders issued, which is what Empire means by a turn-based alternative

A collection of tactical scenarios are included based on historical events.

"The AI just doesn't do the job in either mode."

A host of wargame mechanics are in place, which make for an impressive system, with an especially well modelled command system, which reflects the problems involved in managing units at the Division, Corps and Army level. Supply is handled fairly simplistically yet effectively. When forces encounter each other and certain criteria are met, the opportunity arises to take to the battlefield and resolve the outcome. There are also some standalone battles for this (essentially separate) engine, so you can cut your teeth on the tactical battles prior to playing the strategic campaigns. The battles take place on a hex based map, though again the action is in real time, with the same (so called) turn-based alternative in place.

Problems arise because there are no multi-player inclusions whatsoever. Surprising, in this day and age, but even more unforgivable as the AI just doesn't get the job done in either Strategic or Tactical mode. Tactically, the enemy units will perform fairly historical manoeuvres, such as forming square when threatened by cavalry, but overall it seems to rely on reactive tactics, making it predictable and less than challenging. In the strategic game it just seems to lack direction. This, along with some careless programming and minor flaws, means that our wishes have come to naught once more.

JASON WESTON

■ Publisher **Empire** ■ Developer **In House** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb RAM, 100Mb HD**
■ Recommended **P266, 64Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-player **None**
■ Web Address **www.empire.co.uk** ■ Release date **Out Now**

PCGAMER

Not tonight, Josephine. *1813's* plans for world conquest are scuppered from the outset.

66%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Civil War PCG 20, 87%
Could be seen as the forerunner to the Wargamer series, but had its share of problems

Napoleon in Russia PCG 46, 81%
One of the better Battleground games, but lacks the scale and imagination of *Napoleon 1813*

GENRE: RACING: ARCADE

M25 RACER

It's *Midtown Madness* on the streets of London. Except it isn't quite...

Tower Bridge up ahead. Time to buzz the jam sandwich.

AS SEEN ON TV! watch it

One race starts on a motorway leading into London. Not strictly the M25, then.

WATCH OUT!

One of the strangest things about *M25* is its collision detection. All the objects that the programmers are proud to show off flying through the air are bumped by you car despite clearly being a good game foot from the side of your motor. Conversely, immovable scenery – walls and the like – seem to have a strangely spongy, forgiving surface, making the business of cornering even easier.

REALISM. Do we want it in our games because it's fun? Or do we want it because it helps us sink ourselves in an alternative reality? I only ask because *M25 Racer* is simultaneously the most realistic and the most unrealistic racing game that the PC currently has.

Good points first, though, and as you can see from the screenshots and guess from the name, *M25 Racer* is a racing game set in the UK. You compete in three progressively faster leagues, racing against seven CPU opponents on a variety of public roads. Controversially, the Police are out in force to stop you, deploying road blocks and attempting to run you off the road, and bonuses are awarded for knocking over GATSO speed cameras. Win races to earn money, buy new cars, and enter the next league etc, etc, etc

Which is all excellent. London really does look like London. You can race through Trafalgar Square, or across the front lawn at Buck' House, dodging trailing Police Range Rovers and avoiding oncoming taxis, buses and Honda Civics. Similarly, Oxford is recreated visually (if not geographically) and even GAMER's very own West Country sneaks in with races past Stonehenge and through Avebury. The familiar scenery makes it feel like payback time for a thousand car games set in a faceless American nowhere, and there's also no doubt that anyone who does any driving will love smashing the speed cameras.

"London does really look like London."

However, - there is a 'however'. While *M25 Racer* is joyfully realistic in the scene-setting, immersive atmospherics kind of way, it is ludicrously unrealistic when it comes to the actual game itself. I'm not boasting when I say that completing the game's three leagues took little more than four hours. More critical is the fact that the 'Brake' key was never once deployed. Every car in the game from the 'Nimi' to the 'Trafalguar XK8' handle like they're running on rails. Sharp turns at 100mph+ don't phase them; short cuts across grass verges are handled with aplomb; deviations through roadworks cause nary a shudder – it's just all too simple. Compare this with the twitchy high-speed handling in *Midtown Madness* and *Driver* and you're faced with the inescapable conclusion that the ignorantly easy car dynamics in *M25* drain most of the fun banked by the game's great looks and familiar settings.

At full price, *M25* would be a dead duck – its local appeal drowned out by simplistic game design. At a more friendly £20, however, Infogrames are tempting a more casual, or kids market who will be less disappointed by the startling ease of it all. Experienced gamers? It all comes down to how many London taxis have cut you up recently and how many speeding tickets you've had.

JAMES ASHTON

Lose control (it's a rare event) and you'll end up falling under a bus.

PCGAMER PROFILE

M25 Racer is:
- A childishly simple racing game
- Set on British roads
- Fun for a while

M25 Racer is not:
- As clever as *Midtown* or *Driver*
- A long-term prospect
- Overpriced at £20

■ Publisher **Infogrames** ■ Developer **Davilex** ■ Price **£20** ■ Minimum System **P166, 16Mb RAM, 50Mb HD, x4 CD-ROM, Windows 95/98** ■ Recommended **P233, 32Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3dfx** ■ Multi Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.infogrames.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PCGAMER

A great idea but not followed through to its full potential. Fun for a while, though.

61%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Midtown Madness PCG71, 91%
Lunatic opposition, hard-as-nails cops, Chicago at your mercy – the finest driving game this year

Need for Speed: Road Challenge PCG72, 81%
Similar cop action to *M25*. Better handling and, overall, a slicker game

Ford RACING

It's time to stop worrying about increased insurance premiums, stone chips and your less interesting Sunday morning rituals...

- Hi-res textures
- Rigid body dynamics
- Advanced AI
- Instant replays
- Multiple camera views
- 3 Championship styles

Extensive range of models available

PC CD-ROM

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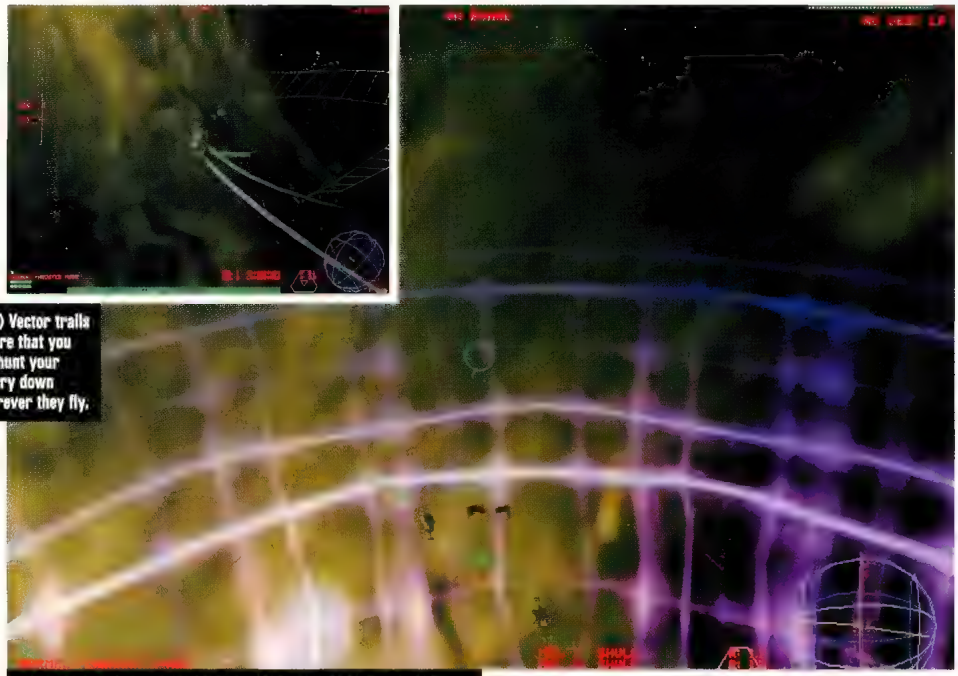
empire SPORT

INDEPENDENCE WAR SPECIAL EDITION: DEFIANCE

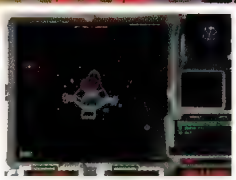
When you're deep in space, no-one can hear you scream – with frustration.

■ Publisher **Infogrames** ■ Developer **Particle Systems** ■ Price **£30**



(Top) Vector trails ensure that you can hunt your quarry down wherever they fly.

It's so hard to change direction, you'll be thankful of your shields.



JUST to prove that we all make mistakes, cast your minds back to 1994 – September, to be precise – when we made the questionable decision to stick Microsoft's *Space Simulator* on our beloved front cover. Okay, so it was the first realistic simulation of space travel, but, as time has proven, most gamers like their space combat fast and dazzling, with an interface as sleek as a wet polecat.

The original *I-War* was the exception that proved the rule. A ship that was inherently difficult to fly thanks to a 'realistic' physics model, vector based navigation aids transforming the gaming screen into a mosaic of primary coloured polygons, and a virtual bridge housing separate screens for the ship's major command options. It al

"less of a sequel and more of a mission pack."

begged the question, if there's nothing to avoid in space, how come it's so bloody hard to fly around?

It was difficult, then, but we still loved it thanks to the gorgeous presentation, objective-packed missions, and sheer bloody mindedness of the whole game. *I-War* made sure you worked hard for your fun, but several well weighted tutorial levels later, you were well on the way to forging an immensely satisfying and successfu career as a Navy Commander.

Special Edition is less of a sequel, and more of a mission pack (albeit a surprisingly generous one). The original game (PCG 49, 90%), plus 3dfx patch and new FMV intro are included, and have dated far better than we expected, even in the light of *Conflict Freespace's* astounding visual benchmark. This is due to *I-War's* reliance on creating a claustrophobic, high-tension atmosphere rather than throwing more and more lens flare at the screen. It's also due to the extreme difficulty of its missions. Without doubt, it remains one of the most sophisticated (and yet still criminally underrated) space sims of recent years

The *Defiance* element is a natural progression too Just as *X-Wing* begat *TIE Fighter*, so the Navy-skewed story-line of *I-War* gives rise to an add-on allowing you to play as the opposing (Indie) forces. To say *Defiance's* 18 missions throw you in at the deep end would be a gross understatement Unless you're au fait with the majority of the original's keyboard commands (all 53 of them), then attempting even the opening mission can be a nightmare

With that in mind, aficionados of games such as *Elite* and *X-COM Interceptor* are going to relish the challenge Those who like their space combat *X-Wing*-flavoured though, should give *Independence War* a wide berth – *Special Edition* or not.

MATTHEW PIERCE

PC GAMER

A superb original that's been slightly updated, plus a large mission pack. Excellent; but still too tough for most.

80%

We don't want to talk about this game any more.

SPACE BASTARDS: SUDDEN JUSTICE

■ Publisher **On Line**
■ Developer **Smoking Gun**
■ Price **£20**

If the names Andrew Hewson, Rob Henderson and Fergus McNeill mean anything to you, you've either been playing computer games since the dawn of time, or have a job in the hugely incestuous gaming industry Take it from us, though: they should have known better than to participate in such a misogynistic, facile, but above all, *tedious* 2D puzzler as this

Space Bastards (oh, you guys!) is essentially *Abe's Oddysee* minus the graphic sophistication, thoughtful puzzling, or high production values Movement is mouse-driven, forcing you to click the direction you want your man to move. The tasks involve manipulating the position of crates or TNT by shooting, bumping or booting them. Once you've cleared a path to the occasional robo-sprite enemies, you shoot them all. Okay missions can get mind-fryingly difficult, but the repetitive nature of them will ensure that you'll very quickly lose interest after you make your first mistake. (Luckily, in true-to Windows fashion you can undo your last move !)

Crass sexual imagery and audio clips run throughout – lowlights include a purple alien taking a naked woman from behind, and persistent impressions of a foul-mouthed Michael Caine. Needless to say, it's an 18 certificate. At £20, *Space Bastards* is at least £19.99 too expensive Electronics Boutique have refused to stock it, in our opinion, to their credit. Should you really feel the urge to indulge in such a twisted combination of monotonous puzzle solving and filth, try sticking a Chubby Brown album on whilst working your way through a word-search magazine instead.

MATTHEW PIERCE

15%

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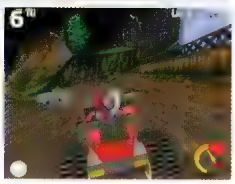
LEGO RACERS

Destroy those happy childhood memories.

■ Publisher **Lego Media** ■ Developer **High Voltage Games** ■ Price **£35**

It's hard to put into words quite how derivative *Lego Racers* really is.

Fat cars slow off line, thin cars quick. DO YOU SEE THE BEAUTY?



WHAT are Lego doing? Yes, market share is down. Yes, profits are down. Yes, it's probably TV and computer games that are distracting kids from more traditional toys like the great Scandinavian bobble-build construction system. But in response, the great Danes aren't fighting their own corner, and they've foolishly stumbled into games production, probably on the grounds that 'anyone can do it'. Instead of concentrating on what they do best, they've attached their name – their brand – to a series of sub-standard games, which will do nothing but damage their reputation with the people that matter most to them.

In addition - and, frankly, most importantly – they've completely ruined all my happy childhood memories of bobbly plastic bricks.

Lego Racers is a cross between *Mario Kart* and *Diddy Kong Racing*, both for the N64. It adds nothing to the mix of karts, tracks, power-ups and simplistic handling that you haven't seen at least five times before in other clones and better *(Re-Volt* was last up in issue 75).

The game would have you believe that short cuts (opened up by use of missile power-ups, natch) and the ability to build your own car are points so unique that they can't help but sell. All but the most inexperienced – (read under-fives) – would disagree.

To be fair, *Lego Racers* is far from technically incompetent. It works, the graphics are smooth (if bland) and there are just about enough tracks and theme variations to pass muster. What leaves you yawning is that there is nothing - *nothing* – new to be found. Anywhere. This is game design by numbers; the only original thing is that it's Lego – which just doesn't work on a computer. (See *Lego Loco* – PCG 71, 18% and *Lego Creator* – PCG 71, 45% if you don't believe me.)

"Nothing new... this is game design by numbers."

So, it's not for us experienced gamers. *Lego Racers* is presumably aimed at parents worried about little Johnny's fascination with the computer screen and his total inability to manipulate simple physical objects. As a method of driving him away from the VDU and outside to do something less boring instead I can see this working fine. Unfortunately, if *Lego Racers* emerges from his little stocking on Christmas Day, tears before bedtime seems the most likely outcome.

JAMES ASHTON

PC GAMER

A dull karting clone presumably aimed at kids – who won't find it much cop, either. The Lego gimmick is fun for five minutes.

45%

EXPERT POOL

■ Publisher **GT**
■ Developer **Psygnosis**
■ Price **£35**

Like the enduring, inexplicable success of pinball and fishing games, pool sims are – considering their niche subject matter – in good supply. There's no clear reason for so many to exist on the PC, yet new ones turn up in our reviewing basket with alarming regularity

Psygnosis are the latest to chance their hand at the perennial pub pastime, and the result is a game that's both curiously compelling and utterly frustrating at the same time. A whopping 19 different game types are offered including such obscurities as 3-Ball, but nowhere will you find an option to play our favoured UK variation – the one that invariably uses red and yellow marbles, preferably on a ripped table and with just the one cue..

Similarly, chalking your cue is essential to avoid foul shots (a neat idea); but the feature is ruined by cumbersome execution. You can only chalk during your own shot, and it takes a good three seconds to perform the animation. It sounds pedantic, but the pause seems an eternity once you've taken time to aim your cue.

In fact, for every plus-point *Expert Pool* chalks up, it commits a foul. The 13 different venues have no background animations or dynamic lighting, the crudely modelled rival players take too long to walk around the table, and, unlike *Pool Shark,* there are no exotic alternative table shapes on offer.

The game itself does offer a degree of fun, though, thanks largely to a more forgiving physics model than both *Pool Shark* and *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball.* It's still hard to secure victory in the Professional Tournaments and the application of English (side, screw, drag, and top-spin) is overly sensitive, but you can at least manage to sink balls from the off. Perfect for potting practice then, but it's no substitute for a Kronenbourg-fuelled game of Killer down the Duck & Codpiece.

MATTHEW PIERCE

61%

EP has a heavy American bias. Funny, that.

SOME THINGS NEED EXPLANATION...

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replay

THEY'RE BACK!

Lots of dangerous driving and plenty of shooting. But if you couldn't make it to this year's Edinburgh Fringe festival, fret not – there are always these re-releases.

By STEVE OWEN

VICIOUS PACK

■ Publisher **Virgin** ■ Price **£30**

(Right) They might look like muscular Teletubbies, but don't mess with the Skaarj.

(Right) Conversely, the zombies in *Res Evil 2* are stupid and slow. Who'd have thought it?

AH, we've been missing the old compilation box – trust Virgin to bring it back in style. For your 30 smackers you get, as one third of the deal, SCi's *Carmageddon 2* – the most recent of the shameless car series programmed by physics-obsessives Stainless. It's just like the original, which means that the graphics engine is too slow, but it looks good – and drives surprisingly well.

Stainless have thankfully stuck in some more missions and challenges to keep things interesting this time around. In the end, though, the laughter comes from hideously mauling the poor suckers that populate the varied levels, leaping in a ridiculous fashion over the roofs of buildings, and landing uncomfortably on cows. It may be a bit too self-indulgent, but fun for a short while

Resident Evil 2 is excellent, and represents another third of the Vicious Pack. It's a pixel-perfect remake of the PlayStation hit from Capcom, featuring bunches of zombies trying to eat your face off, while you attempt battle with far too little ammo. It seems simplistic on the PC, but there's no denying that Capcom's excellent use of atmosphere and music ensures some late night sweats when the lights are low and the speakers are turned up high

"Ensures late night sweats when the lights are low."

Finally, to top it off, Virgin shrug their shoulders and think, sod it, you might as well have something really good! Thus *Unreal* finds its sweet way into the last third of the box. As one of the best first-person shooters ever made, *Unreal* is typified by stunning graphics, which are still astonishing to look at today (and barely unchanged in *Unreal Tournament*, which is still up there with *Quake III Test*). It's got lovely large maps, but rubbish weapons, and unimaginative monsters

Can you see the pattern yet? Vicious Pack, blood thirsty games, and Hallowe'en just around the corner. Those marketing boys sure do earn their dough!

PC GAMER 86%

Good value for money: three good games rather than five average ones. That's what we like to see.

COLIN MCRAE RALLY

■ Publisher **Codemasters Classics** ■ Price **£13**

Such is the popularity of this excellent game that just last month Codemasters entered the PlayStation version into the BAFTA Interactive Entertainment Awards, a year after it originally appeared. You can take it from us that despite being up against newer titles, it did very well

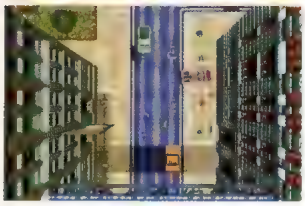
The reason it does so well is because it handles beautifully. It's that single element which is so important to get right – one that Codemasters seem to have sussed, with a bit of help from Colin. They also know to make it slightly simpler than it is in real life! Conversely, when Ubi Soft claimed that *F1 Racing Simulation* was designed with the help of Jean Alesi – it turned out to be so difficult that it wasn't any fun.

Colin McRae Rally, on the other hand, offers no end of it. A wonderfully created arcade game that handles so well, you could be doing the real thing. There are no other cars to race against (as is the case in rally driving), but this doesn't detract from the game at all. On the contrary; you can now fully concentrate on taking the wonderfully designed tracks perfectly, and squeezing that extra hundredth of a second from every corner. At this price – lunacy! This is a game that you simply must own

93%

GRAND THEFT AUTO

■ Publisher **Sold Out**
■ Price **£10**



My eyebrows still register surprise that a game as old-looking as *Grand Theft Auto* proved not only to be rather good, but so enormously popular. Perhaps on a par with this surprise is that *GTA 2* doesn't look much different.

This is Sold Out's big launch under its new, special budget label, in a brave attempt to use its good name in battle with everyone else at the £10 price point. They don't get much bigger than *GTA*. Back into this year's Top 100, and this time making the Top Five, *GTA* is proof that we can still play old-school games – a game that worries more about making itself damn good fun rather than looking nice.

Which isn't to say that the almost-3D engine doesn't work well. It deliberately concentrates on right-angled turns to simplify your route around the city and encourage wheel spins around corners. There's a huge number of varied cars to steal, and with which to maim innocent pedestrians. You can kill cops and, well, just about everyone. Missions are collected by payphone delivered instructions from crime bosses, encouraging further car theft, assassination and the delivery of stolen goods. Basically, you're a baddie – and it feels great! Do I feel like going out and murdering people in real life? Do I arse. However, playing it has made me ruder. Hm..

88%

BLOOD II: THE CHOSEN

■ Publisher **GT Replay**
■ Price **£13**

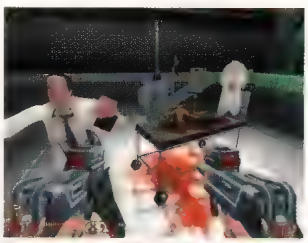
Despite being better than the very-average *Blood*, *Blood II* didn't seem to sell when it was released just seven months ago. Hence this rather swift budget appearance – hopefully, an opportunity for the game to sell what it deserves. Which is lots.

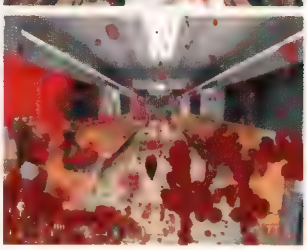
Using Monolith's own Lithtech engine, *Blood II* takes the special effects offered by Lithtech to endlessly splatter the screen with the titular claret. Everything should be destroyed, including the pedestrians littering the outdoor locations, whose hearts keep your health topped up.

Set pieces are well-realised, although you'd be advised not to charge into the fray without a thought about how to get out again, as this is one seriously tough game. Monsters 'know' where you are - making sneaking up to or around them impossible. Also, odds are against you after lengthy one on ones, so snipe them from a distance.

If you need the gore-fix of a full on attack, then you'll appreciate the many end of level bosses, all of which are well designed, if a little lacking in AI. This is why *Blood II* isn't a classic. It needs some smarter monsters - their lack of intelligence is deliberately hidden by them being overly tough. This doesn't strike me as being much of an alternative.

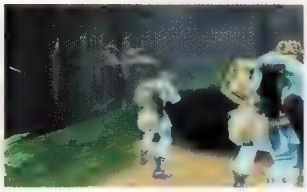
79%





SPECIAL OPS

■ Publisher **Sold Out**
■ Price **£10**



Number two on Sold Out's hot new list of tenner-priced games is *Special Ops*, Take 2's genre-creating soldier sim. The problem with being the first with anything is that someone's probably going to do it better than you soon after. Sure enough, *Special Ops* has been heavily improved upon by *Delta Force*, *Rainbow Six* and *Hidden & Dangerous*.

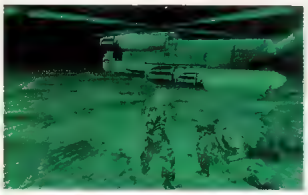
Special Ops has probably got more of a place in the budget market, because its shortcomings are niggles rather than game-destroying. While *Delta Force* featured a number of support soldiers while you controlled just one (which worked well), and *Hidden And Dangerous* had four soldiers that you could flick between at will (which also worked), *Special Ops* only gives you the opportunity to flick between two guys. At least the one you are not controlling is intelligent enough not to walk in front of you when you open fire.

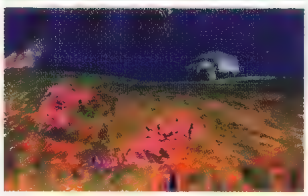
The niggles are that you don't have to aim too accurately, as much point in roughly the right direction and let the game choose which target it wants to concentrate on. This can make targeting a truck while soldiers are piling out of the back surprisingly difficult.

The other problem is that the levels are unnecessarily large, and without a clear indication of where you should be heading it's only a matter of time before you get hopelessly lost.

Still, it might keep you happy until *Delta Force 2* arrives some time next year.

76%



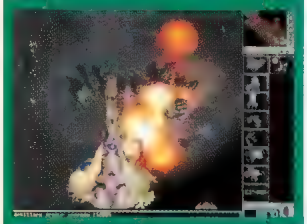


AND THE REST...

Recently we reported the re-release of the excellent *TOCA Touring Car* (87%) which never actually appeared. Codemasters

promise it's definitely out now. While significantly improved upon by the sequel, it's still a beautifully crafted game, ingeniously mixing arcade driving with simulation aspects. That's a poncey way of saying it's a good game. *Colin McRae Rally* is better, though, and at the same price of £13.

Gametek's *Dark Colony* (48%) is the final one of Sold Out's pricier range, and the least impressive of the three. It's an



RTS game, which looks good, but plays like a dog. Rather disappointing really, considering that Gametek took out most of the strategy for resource gathering and base building.

The same month that Core brought us *Tomb Raider*, they also turned up with the hilariously poor *Giant Machinehead* (37%). Some chesty chick is strapped to a floating bike and must kill monsters.

That's all there is to it. It's cheap though, at the bargain price of £5 from Sold Out.

Lastly in this month's spread of dread is Havas' *Pro Pilot '98* (70%), inexplicably priced at £15. It's fine as a flight sim, but it's hard to find anything to shoot down! Nuff said.

The videogame magazine

Arcade

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IN SHORT

Your mad, All Mad.
Alex Gunn, e-mail

All our mad whats?
Ed

I saw Kieron on 'Gamers', and the poor lad sounded like he had a blocked nose. Did he get a cold or does he always sound like that?
Simon Green, e-mail

No, he's always like that. ***Ed***

I congratulate Groove Champion for his MP3 track, which is amazing.
Alexandre Mauppin, e-mail

They love me! They really love me! ***Ross***

I notice that issue 74 of PC GAMER contained the word "chimps", but issue 73 did not. Why is this?
James Page, e-mail

LITTLE CONFUSED

I was left feeling a little confused after reading your reviews of *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun* and *TA: Kingdoms* in PCG 73. It seemed to me that *Kingdoms* was being marked down for not having significantly improved the gameplay over what we saw in the original *TA*.

However, *C&C* was commended for making those giant improvements which *TA* originally brought us. I do not disagree with the scores awarded, though, as I have always preferred the *Command & Conquer* games.

But does this mean that, if a sequel does not improve much on the original, even if it is just as good, then it cannot achieve the same score?
Mohammed Faiz, Birmingham

***Kingdoms* and *Tib Sun*: twin causes of much RTS chin-stroking.**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

INFINITELY INCREASE

As unpopular as it may make me, I want to question the way you review games. Your slightly harsh style of reviewing is better than other magazines', and, although I agree with the majority of your scores, I don't think you take enough into account. You disregard the advantages of patches and downloads; and now that the majority of gamers have Internet access, they have access to files which infinitely increase the enjoyment and longevity of their games.

For example, you criticised *Monaco Grand Prix* (PCG 63, 81%) on the grounds that it had false names. I bought the game and immediately downloaded the 1999 driver line-up; it's now superb and much better than *Official F1 Racing*, which you gave a higher mark (PCG 70, 90%).

I realise you review games in an 'as is' fashion, because that is the product the publisher sells, but, let's face it, how many of us stick to the original configuration?
Pete Walker, Carlisle

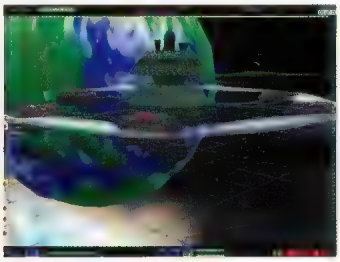
A patch for *MGP* doesn't justify a higher score...

While Internet distribution does give PC games an enormous advantage in distributing extra levels, mods, updates and the like, we're still of the opinion that we should review games as they stand on their own when they come into the office. At the end of the day, we pay a lot for new titles and I think we have a right to expect that everything we need to play them should be included in the box. Also, as Internet support doesn't normally arrive until a few weeks after a game's street date, it'd be impossible to come up with a rating based on what *might* turn up on the net. ***Ed***

Kingdoms got a score in the low eighties largely because the missions weren't particularly varied. In retrospect, the twin achievements of *Total Annihilation* were great graphics and a great interface. The missions in *TA* lacked creativity but *Kingdoms* hasn't done much to address this

What's more, *Kingdoms'* graphics and interface aren't anything special compared to contemporary RTS games, as everyone else has caught up. Clearly, if you compared *TA* and *Kingdoms* now you wouldn't think that *Kingdoms* was markedly worse. But, relatively speaking, *Kingdoms* compares less favourably with the state of the art than *TA* did 2 years ago

Tiberian Sun, on the other hand, scored well because every single mission is poised on a knife-edge They're incredibly well-balanced and full of little twists; you can't just sit back and accumulate troops till you're unbeatable. You've got to fight. And as the armies are carefully designed it's a great challenge. Exciting missions are the most important thing to all of us, which is why we'd rather play *Tiberian Sun* even though *TA* and *Kingdoms* still have the better interface. ***Mark.***



ISSUE, ENTICED

I'm a regular reader of PC GAMER, and I recently bought your September issue, enticed by the promise of both a demo of *Starfleet Command* and extra levels for *Jedi Knight*. The former failed to appear on either of the discs, which was very disappointing.

As promised, there *were* extra levels for *Jedi Knight*, but in the CD pages of the mag you promised a level which was based on the end of *Episode I*, featuring Darth Maul. Although the levels were brilliant, I felt let down by the absence of a *Phantom Menace* level. I'd welcome any explanation you could give about these omissions.

Despite that, the magazine is always a joy to read.

James Knotts, Tyne and Wear

Apologies for the non-appearance of the Starfleet demo – last minute technical problems after we'd printed the magazine's backing board (but before the disc masters went for duplication) meant we had to drop that particular demo. We tried to make up for this in issue 74, when the demo did make it onto the disc

As far as the *Jedi Knight* patch with Darth Maul is concerned, sadly LucasArts lawyers threatened baseball bat action if we ran it on the disc, so that had to be dropped at the last minute too. Apologies again copyright law being the farce that it is, you can find the level for yourself on www.jediknight.net. ***Ed***

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Or e-mail cables@futurenet.co.uk

LACK OF MOTIVATION

I just received your mag today, and read the review of *Driver* (PCG 74). However, I disagree with a few points made in the review. When compared to *Midtown Madness*, *Driver* wins hands down. *MM* is just a by-the-numbers racing game with cops and alternative routes to take, whereas with *Driver* there are 6 different mission types, most of them providing loads of fun.

Jonathan Davies then went on to comment on the lack of motivation and how the Lieutenant seemed to have been shoved into the story-line at the last minute. Well, he was. The 'being a driver for the mob' story-line was becoming a bit too controversial for the publishers, so they asked the developers to change the story-line somewhat. He also commented on the lack of motivation! What more motivation does he need? My motivation is to go out there, tyres screaming, trying to escape the cops and finish the mission.

In the end, *Driver* is the closest we have to *GTA* in 3D, and that can only be a good thing.

Sahil Sachdev, e-mail

Are you an expert on a game you've never played?

When you wrote this, *Driver* wasn't even out on the shelves. And there were no PC demos available. How do you know it's the nearest thing to *GTA* in 3D? HOW DO YOU KNOW? I smell a rat. ***Ed***.

SORELY MISSED

re: Notice of a tragic occasion.

A small gathering of family and admirers gathered on the 1st of September to pay passing tribute to their much loved and sorely missed friend, Mr Single-Player. Though a reclusive soul, he won much respect for his championing of a thoughtful, well-paced and modest way of life. Believed to be responsible for his death were two gentlemen in 3dfx cars who drove past his house earlier in August and 'fragged' him until he could stand it no more. They go under the aliases of *'QuakeIII'* and *'Ultima'*, and should be considered dangerous.

Mr Player will be sorely missed, and his family have asked that those who wish to remember him do so by joining in a game of *Sam & Max*.

Lazarus, Salisbury

Reports of Mr Single-Player's death have been greatly exaggerated. Recent sightings place him firmly in *Driver*, *GTA2*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Age of Empires II*, *GP 500* and many other popular gamespots ***Ed***

Quake III: **innocent of all single-player-killing charges.**

GRUNGE IS DEAD

I was very disappointed to read in your September issue, on the 'It's

IN SHORT

Don't worry, there'll be double next month. ***Ed***

If James really has a green Triumph Spitfire, you should do an article about that instead of some poxy old game.

Terry Nutkins, e-mail

It's only a matter of time, my friend. ***Ed***

Tiberian sun scored 92%, *South Park* scored 8%. Combined, they'd make the best game in the world.

Simon Green, e-mail

What a truly terrifying thought. ***Ed***

Wicci Wicci Wild.
Wicci Wild.
Wicci Wicci Wild
Wild West.

Alexander Au-yeung, e-mail

A connoisseur! ***Ed***

When is *Metal Gear Solid* coming out on the PC?

John Harper, Coventry

It isn't. Sorry. ***Ed***

Is Jim Flynn really a wattle and daub puppet? If so, I'll pay £20 for him.

Charlie Chester, London

£30, and he's yours. ***Ed***

Wow a comet has passed the earth lets shoot things and swear a lot yippie.

Chris, e-mail

Eh? ***Ed***

What's next? alienating readers who prefer shredded to non-shredded marmalade?

James Gregory, e-mail

Good grief, let's hope not. ***Ed***

IN SHORT

He's mean, he's green – but when will he get here?
Anon, e-mail

Godzilla will only be stomping about on the Dreamcast. ***Ed***

You should do more articles about wildlife in general.
Terry Nutkins, e-mail

You won't get back in the limelight that easily, Terry. ***Ed***

A realistic flight sim is not supposed to be easy.
Serge Lioutyi, London

That's right. Just boring. ***Ed***

Consoles destroyed *Quake II!*
Christopher Wilson, e-mail

Cast out the evil machines! ***Ed***

Do you have a separate mailbag for all the In Short hate-mail Kieron gets?
Mr MorrisDancer, e-mail

Kieron's using it all to make a ten-foot papier-mache effigy of himself. ***Ed***

> All Over' page, that you seem to think grunge is dead. How dare you! The day that grunge has no followers (and, believe me, it has a sea of followers) is the day the world is cast into eternal darkness.

This means you are openly discrediting bands like Green Day, Korn and Silverchair! Your opinion doesn't give you the right to bad-mouth a genre which is at the peak of its popularity! Don't try to force your opinions onto others!

HELLO? Social life alert! You lot are nothing but sad bastards, who sit at computers and play games all day.
Michael Francis, Billericay

As opposed to spending all day shambling around shopping centres in artfully distressed combats, looking miserable and smelling like a tramp, presumably. Takes all sorts. ***Ed***

Ah, the great game-save debate comes around again.

POINT YOU LIKE

I think there's a major problem going on in the gaming industry: and that is being able to save at any point you like in most games.

Take *Quake II*. In my saved games listing some saves were as little as two seconds apart! Many games have now got a stupid, skill-wrecking rhythm which involves:
1: Playing
2: Dying
3: Reloading
Which is complete and utter boredom. It's getting to the stage where games aren't fun. They're a chore to be completed. *Aliens Versus Predator* was good because it was easy to mess up a level and there was no save function to fall back on. But *Half-Life*, while it was brilliant, followed the same saving pattern as *QII*.

I think that all games should save like *Resident Evil* or *FFVII*. Save points or crystals force people to use skill to get through a game rather than saving regularly.
Rhys Rhodes, e-mail

We couldn't agree more. Kieron praised *HAD* for eschewing the 'save after every difficult bit', only for the designers to throw in a heavily bugged save option right at the last minute. It was due to pressure from the Americans : they can't stand titles where you can't save whenever you fancy. *Save freedom destroys the tension in games – designers don't program it, players don't use it!* PC GAMER Directive 4638 ends. ***Ed***

BURGER SHOPS

I feel I need to complain about your game design section as I don't think it's fair. PCG 74 saw Chris Sawyer judging the designs, and the winner was Chris John with 'Robot Wars'. Now don't get me wrong, but who actually likes the programme? It is 100% gobshite with nerds who spend their life building robots who then come out of their holes to 'fight' another nerd and his robot. If you ask me the game would be even worse and turn out just like *Star Trek: Starship Creator*. Now on the other hand I really liked Mark Laming's idea of the WWI game and I thought it was the best design there.

Chris Sawyer didn't choose this though, because this isn't his type of game. Now if he had sent it in a different time to a different developer (maybe one of the Illusion Softworks team) he may have stood more of a chance as his game didn't involve ice creams and burger shops. I think the different genres should be grouped together, then a developer who knows about that certain genre can judge the designs that are sent in. Last month's was a perfect example of this unfairness (Chris Sawyer playing war games? I don't think so!).
Rob Allen, e-mail

Chris Sawyer: not just a pretty face, y'know.

We send the game designs off, the celeb in question sends back their opinions. If we started tampering with them, it would rather spoil the idea. Mind you, Guy Miller (*Shadowman*, Iguana UK) was so harsh to that month's hapless designers, we had to drop his contribution. ***Ed***

CABLES ARE MALE

It seems that most, if not all, of the people who write into Cables are male. In all seven PC GAMER issues that I own there is not one female winner of letter of the month. The same is true for other sections of PC GAMER: the majority of readers in Uncensored, Gamer Snap, and Grand Designs are male.

Has a female person ever written in to PC GAMER? If not, what does this mean? Are computer games purely a man's interest? If so, do we need help?

But there's something to make the matter even worse. All fourteen people who regularly write for PC GAMER are male!
Peter Gustafen, Gibraltar

Ross says that a significant number of the letters he receives for his Q&A section are from 'laydeez'. He attributes this to his dashing good looks and natural, easy charm. The rest of us remain unconvinced. And Kieron's sulking. ***Ed***

UNCENSORED

We've been sent so many reviews of ***Tiberian Sun***, we felt it only fair to do a **special round-up...**

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

■ EA/Westwood ■ PCG 73, 92% ■ Demo: None

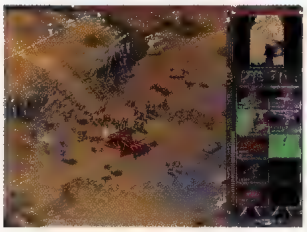
DO you remember the taster video you saw three years ago in *Command & Conquer*? Well, now it's here, and it's great. Other contenders take a hike – nothing is going to beat this game.

It has the most delicately balanced units I have ever seen: having artillery instead of a Tick tank can sway the battle in your favour. Not only are theypowerful and awesome, they also have some amazing graphics, thanks to voxels.

Terrain plays a big part. Cliffs can be blown apart to gain access to an enemy base from behind, while ice bridges collapse beneath you. All this brings a new twist to the game and forces you to use varied tactics.

There's also an intriguing story-line, pulling you into this futuristic world at war, making you want to go out and kill GDI goody-goodies or thrash Nod with the Mammoth Mark II. Although it's a little on the easy side, the three difficulty levels, skirmishes and multi-player will keep you enthralled for weeks.

James Balcombe, Portsmouth



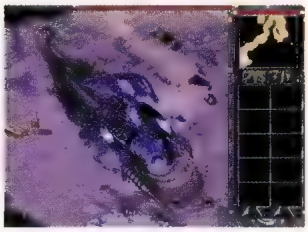
UNCENSORED **95%** Without doubt, the best game of the year.

THE original was superb. *Red Alert* then improved on it. The question was, could the best game ever get any better? The answer, of course, is yes – but the world had to wait, and then wait some more. Was the waiting worth it? Well – the game went straight into number one in the charts.

Anyway, enough about the background. You start with a choice. If you want to save the world then go with the GDI, but if you have the ability and power to rule the world go with the Brotherhood of Nod. In theory, it's similar to its older brothers: each side has a charismatic leader. The GDI's is General Solomon while Nod's is Kane, and the FMVs are great scene-setters

You start the missions with minimal low-tech weapons but as you progress you will get a better arsenal of troops, vehicles and buildings. Your job is to stop the enemy from taking over the world; this is a huge task – but one which *Tiberian Sun* presents brilliantly.

Chris Krawczyk, e-mail



UNCENSORED **97%** It's *C&C2*. What more could you ask for?

I'M not going to do it. I'm not going to start my review like everyone else and say that this is what I've been waiting for since I was born. Sorry, but I hate this game. Why? Maybe because it's *exactly* the same as *Red Alert*, which was *exactly* the same as *C&C*, which was *exactly* the same as *Dune 2*.

Seeing a pattern yet? All of Westwood's 'strategy' games consist of a badly acted FMV briefing at the beginning of each mission, and then require you to build 50 of your most powerful units and go stomp on the enemy. Oh, and all the units are the same. You get a rifleman on both sides, a grenadier on one, and a rocket infantry on one.

It is good fun, I suppose. Up to about level 7, that is, when you realise that in every level you're going to get a massive feeling of déja vu. So go on, delete this game from your hard disk, and go and spend your time playing real strategy games, like *Battlezone*, *Starcraft* and *Total Annihilation*.

Gunnar Thor Magnusson, Iceland.

UNCENSORED **34%** Westwood RTS repeats itself again, and again...

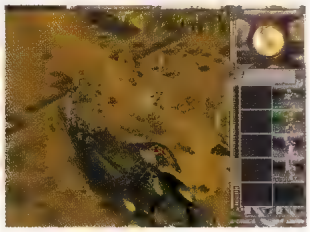
THIS game has been, and is one of the best I have played for months. Well done Westwood! Even though it may not use 3D accelerated graphics, it keeps the old *C&C* style.

They've made some very necessary improvements, such as the waypoint system which allows you to set patrol routes for your troops, and also the excellent selection of units. As well as being unique to the game, each unit manages to have its own strengths and weaknesses.

There are also some great built-in multi-player features, but I wouldn't say it was just for Internet gamers: the single-player missions are bound to keep you playing for very many months to come. I also cannot see patches ever being released for this game; I guess Westwood must just care about their games and not about their wallets.

So go out now and buy *Tiberian Sun*. Answer this: how many high-quality games can you find that work perfectly on a P166?

Daniel Sherlock, Surrey



UNCENSORED **94%** Other game developers take a long hard look.

Another Uncensored draws to a close, and we bid farewell to our four *Tiberian Sun* pundits. It'll be back to normal next month, so send in your reviews of any PC game you like. Our only requests are that you keep the word-count down (150 words maximum) and that you keep them interesting! Positive, negative – we don't care – just be brave, and tell us how you really feel about a game.

Send your reviews to: **Uncensored, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW** or e-mail them to: **pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk.**

Please include the text of your review in the e-mail, or attach it as a plain **.txt file.** If you don't, there's no way that our steam-powered computers will be able to cope with your *Word 13.0* documents.

GAMER SNAP

Hark! What light through yonder window breaks? Oh. It looks mightily like the infamous GAMER Snap gallery.

HOW IT WORKS

ON THE CD

Put simply, it's a gallery for gaming moments. If you happen upon something funny, entertaining or just plain gorgeous, we want you to take a screenshot and send it to us. We'll do some sifting, choose a few for public display in the magazine, and slide some more onto CD GAMER (see Disc 2). To make things a little more spicy, the Snap Of The Month receives a prize. A simple, yet effective, formula, don'cha think? If you're e-mailing, please convert them to .jpg format for convenience's sake. Much as we'd like to print a long series, please try to keep it brief.

BRING IT STACK

To the compilers of this column, this month will be remembered as... the month of stacks. This is because every computer photojournalist has been gathering shots of people sitting on top of other peoples' heads. However, without a shred of a doubt, the finest was grabbed by Jonathan P. Gabriel. It's not only high, but a genuine up-turned anthill of excitement. It inspired everyone in the office to jump on top of each other until our publisher told us to stop. A prize for Mr Jonathan P. Gabriel? What a grand idea

PERSONAL SPACE TRESPASSER

Frankly, I don't think that he's her type. The shot's from Mark Bennett, and provides proof that even the worst games offer snap opportunities for the budding camera-smith.

FORMULA

You really wouldn't believe how much it cost to sponsor this race. Thanks to Dave Burlow for immortalising the moment.

SNAP OF THE MONTH

HOW'S MATRIX?

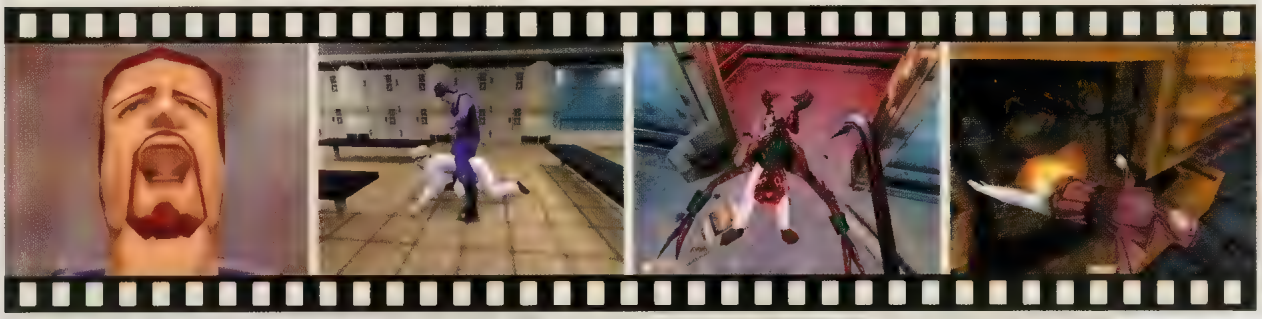
Some sterling image manipulation work from David Lyon. They would've possibly been snap of the month were it not for the fact that no-one on GAMER (apart from Trev and Jim) actually liked the film that much. Such is life.

STACK FOR GOOD

Unless something absolutely stunning arrives, no more stacks will be appearing in these pages. Look at the competition here. Mark Simpson looks pretty high, but Jon Thewlis tops him considerably... only for Tony Marklove to decimate that piddling tower. So Jon detonates his in a big sulk. Result.

SEXUAL UNAPPEALING

Perverts one and all. From left to right: Wedge Antilles is clearly a very big fan of Gordon Freeman – even up to the point of buying a doll. Tom Brocken reveals that in digital love, your sex makes no difference, and Leon Kenich improves on that by showing that *species* makes no difference. Finally, the Marquis de Sade would be proud of Guy Watson's hot-oil treatment. Ouch.



(Left to right) 1) It scrubs clean, too. 2) Ticket to ride scientists. 3) What number am I thinking of? 4) There are few things finer than the taste of deep fried meaty balls.

Madness abounds in the *Middle* of town.

QUITE LITERALLY MADNESS

Let's hope that Paul Waner can eventually get his copy of *Midtown Madness* working properly eh? Perhaps then he'll be able to get a shot as good as Robbie Hughes. I was particularly impressed with Master Hughes' shot of fresh-faced yankee doodle work outs. It would be an impressive crowd to charge through the middle of.

ROAD-KILL

One of *Hidden And Dangerous'* many appealing aspects is its vehicles. Nick Cubberly snaps a budding motorbike stunt team. Duncan and Graeme Taylor also reveal an early British experiment in submersible technology.

(Main) Keeping the sunroof open was a mistake.

CALLING ALL SNAPS

It's time to get sending folks, and here's how: You can use a game's built in grabber to fix an image or use the Hypersnap program on CD GAMER 1. (Instructions are on the disk too). It's mighty helpful if you make the picture's filename the same as yours. Oh, and send them as .jpg files, – some .bmp files have been excluded by our network's file-size limit!

If you've taken the best snap? You win a special, secret prize. Natch.

Send your entries on floppy to GAMER SNAP, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or attach them to an e-mail and send them to pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk.

GRAND DESIGNS

Are good games a matter of chance or design? You gentlefolk go for the latter. Judging your designs this month is Elixir's Demis Hassabis.

OUR intention when creating this column was to provide a forum in which you could rant about your dream game designs. However, your ideas are much more imaginative than we expected them to be. So, rather than using our own feeble minds to choose the finest, we bring in a real games designer to sort the wheat from the Mr Chafes.

This month it's Demis Hassabis, ex-Bullfrog and leading light at new development group Elixir. His first project is still surrounded with secrecy, but, as Demis is a chess grandmaster, we'd say that strategy will have something to do with it.

OPERATIVES

The game would be based in a film noir-style world, and the player would be part of a secret organisation that is currently investigating a worldwide corporation (KyroTech). The player takes the role of the head of operations to do with the investigation and so has total control over the agents (Operatives) and how they investigate KyroTech. The world view allows the player to select any part of the world in which to conduct their investigations. The player must plan carefully, and if they wish take part in missions to aid the investigation, the player has total control, making the game less linear.

However, the organisation expects results, and this keeps the player within a set boundary of what is acceptable. That is, unless during the course of the game, they switch sides and join the shadowy realm of KyroTech, helping to battle the ongoing investigation. The game lasts for 20 years, and during this time the player must take care of their operatives, gaining new recruits and putting experienced operatives in charge of parts of the investigation (taking some of the strain from the player).

DEMIS SAYS: I think this has the potential to be a really interesting game. The combination of a management sim (overall control and direction of the operation) and first person adventure/stealth-'em-up could work very well. Also, I've always like ideas involving secret organisations and plans, it gives the potential for bizarre story-lines, characters and plot twists.

HACKER

By DAVID BRIGGS

Hacker is a turn-based game in which you, as the hacker, aspire to Lawnmower Man esque greatness. You start with a mediocre PC, an Internet connection and puny bank balance. The main aim is to expand your empire physically and financially. By going to chat sites you gain important info, useful contacts, and rumours of badly protected sites where you can pinch some dough.You'll need more which means setting up trade, in whatever you please. Buy from other sites and sell for profit – maybe hiring allies in the process, but to make big cash you have to the crack big sites. You use the cash to upgrade your PC and ISP, but do you go for the faster or the more reliable?

If another hacker trespasses on your property, that's the turn-based part. Use your technologies to crash his machine and organise a wave of attacks from you or your allies. You could even re-direct his attacks to Microsoft so they can deck him for you!

DEMIS SAYS: This design seems to me to be more suited to a book. The concept itself is both interesting and original (and that has to be worth something these days!). However, as it stands the game is a little too abstract; it's hard to envisage how it would all work visually. The setting is undeniably cool though – a game in virtual, electronic world definitely has plenty of mileage in it.

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Coming Soon from 'The Collection' by Hasbro Interactive: 'Tycoon Collection' and 'Star Trek: The Next Generation Collection'
Available at all good software retailers

AND THE WINNER IS...

CURSE OF DARKNESS
By ALEXANDER FRY

Imagine a man lying in a filthy, wet, cobbled alley, in a pool of blood, moaning as he dies. There is an almost endless row of rusting slum huts and a concrete wall laced with razor wire and strewn with the bodies of those that tried to escape the hell of the city. Freezing cold and in almost constant darkness, the only places people can live are around the huge water pipes pumping used water from below where the rich live in the luxury that they derive from your misery.

CoD is an action strategy RPG (with sensible skills/statistics for characters) in which your aim is to overthrow your oppressive rulers and become a hero. Exactly what happens depends on what group you join, your past (that you set), your personality and actions. Travel the fully interactive city gaining support and making contacts. To win, you must plan and carry out your own revolution, controlling yourself, your group (if you're in charge) and carrying out terrorism against your enemies whilst rallying the people and eventually confronting the evil General. It'd be a fun, evil, *Final Fantasy VII* with more plot freedom and possibly huge multi-player games (global versions!).

DEMIS SAYS:

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER WARS
By SEAN HAMMOND

This is a game set in the Star Wars universe during the old trilogy in which you play a bounty hunter. You accept bounties that have been put out by various characters for assassination, kidnapping, protection, bombings and other missions. You can pick and choose which to accept, and on completion of a mission you retrieve your bounty, which is used to buy new weapons, ammo, a new ship, hire or bribe people for intelligence information etc

The game would follow the kind of plot *X Wing: Alliance* does. You could even compete for certain bounties against characters from the books like Boba Fett, or could be hired to capture Han Solo, or assassinate an Imperial Admiral on board his Star Destroyer. The possibilities are endless. The emphasis would be on stealth like *Thief*, but with killing and brute force to be applied when necessary.

For that special added touch, you're character could be a fledgling Jedi who, without a mentor, must develop his skills on his own, turning to the light or dark side depending on the missions you accept and how you choose to execute them

DEMIS SAYS:

THE ITALIAN JOB
By SEAN HAMMOND

The Italian Job would be a 'multi-type' game, including driving cars in the chase scenes (e.g. *Driver*), planning the ambush on the security van (e.g. *Commandos*), and actually doing it in 3D (e.g. *Rainbow 6*). The game could be played in several ways. You could simply do the same things as in the film, or think up your own plans. It would also be possible to play the game on the polices side, where you're chasing in the chase scenes, and have to prevent the ambush on the security van.

Multi-player games would allow players to take sides in some scenes of the film. You could even take the 'The Multi-player Job' option, where you can act out the whole film This would mean that some policemen/women could distribute orders from a 'control room' to those taking part on the 'battlefields'

DEMIS SAYS:

AND SO IT ENDS...

Congratulations to Alexander Fry. We must insist that he doesn't consider his prize a bribe by the state to stop his ceaseless attempts to overthrow their foul tyranny. We await, with some trepidation, to see what you fellows will summon up for next month's Grand Designs. So tell us: send your ideas (of no more than 200 words) to:

**Grand Designs,
PC GAMER,
30, Monmouth Street,
BATH
BA1 2BW**

or e-mail them to: pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

And remember: While there's a word limit, there's no limit to the number of doodles and pictures you can attach to your meisterwerk.

94% PC Zone
93% Ultimate PC
95% PC Gamer
90% PC Zone

HASBRO Interactive
the collection

WIN!

THE PC OF YOUR DREAMS!

IN our broad experience, hornets are anything but super. Like wasps and hover-flies, they're scary things whose sole role in life appears to be ruining picnics and building ugly paper nests under the gutters of your flat.

Digital Integration, however, have shown us the error of our ways. *Their Hornet* is indeed *Super;* a superbly realistic flight sim that focuses its energy on meticulously recreating fully working aircraft carriers. Complete with the little blokes who run around with coloured flags.

As we expected, *F/A-18E Super Hornet* is a triumph. So it should be (it's been in development for *ages*). This year though, we reckon there's few who will come close to its combination of technical excellence and sheer fun factor. The landing exercises alone are as terrifying as anything you'll see in *Aliens Vs Predator*.

Great stuff then, and a great prize to match. For *F/A 18E Super Hornet's* generous publisher, Titus, has stumped up a fab PC for you to play the game on. We reckon even Kieron could answer these questions, so no excuses for not entering. You want specs too? Try a PIII 500, 128Mb RAM, Voodoo3 card, 56K modem, a lovely new joystick, and naturally a copy of the game itself .

QUESTION

The "Flights of Fancy" Contest

Simply answer the questions and the skies could be yours...

1 Complete the well-known line from a Keith Harris and Orville single: "I wish I could fly, right up to the sky, but..."
A I'm scared of heights.
B My wings are vestigial.
C I've got some guy's hand rammed up my arse.
D I can't.

2 Wickhams Fancy is...
A A village in Somerset.
B A type of angler's fly.
C A new Mr Kipling cake.
D 3dfx's new chipset.

3 'The Green Hornet and Kato' TV series from days gone by starred which famous martial artist?
A Bruce Lee
B Brian Jacks
C Jesus 'The Fighting Man' Fighterman
D Geoff Capes

4 Wings was a rock group featuring which world-famous singer-songwriter?
A David Hasselhoff
B Vanilla Ice
C Paul McCartney
D Sammy 'The Voice' Miguel

Turn to page 138 for news of last month's winners...

Send your answers to: The "Flights of Fancy" Contest, PC Gamer, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2DL, to arrive by 22nd November.

My answers are attached, and I assure you they're correct. In the unlikely event of my coupon being chosen at random, please send my prize to:

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

_____

My most wanted

This bit's optional, but we'd like you to let us know the five forthcoming PC games you're most looking forward to, to aid us in compiling our Readers' Most Wanted chart.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

If you do not wish to be kept informed of future events or offers from PC GAMER or its associates, please tick this box. ☐

RULES

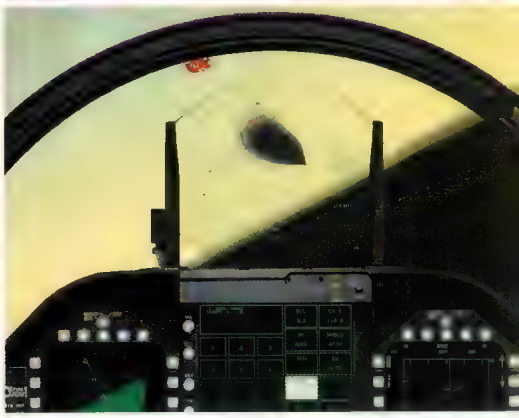
1. Employees of Future Publishing, Titus and Digital Integration won't win even if they enter.

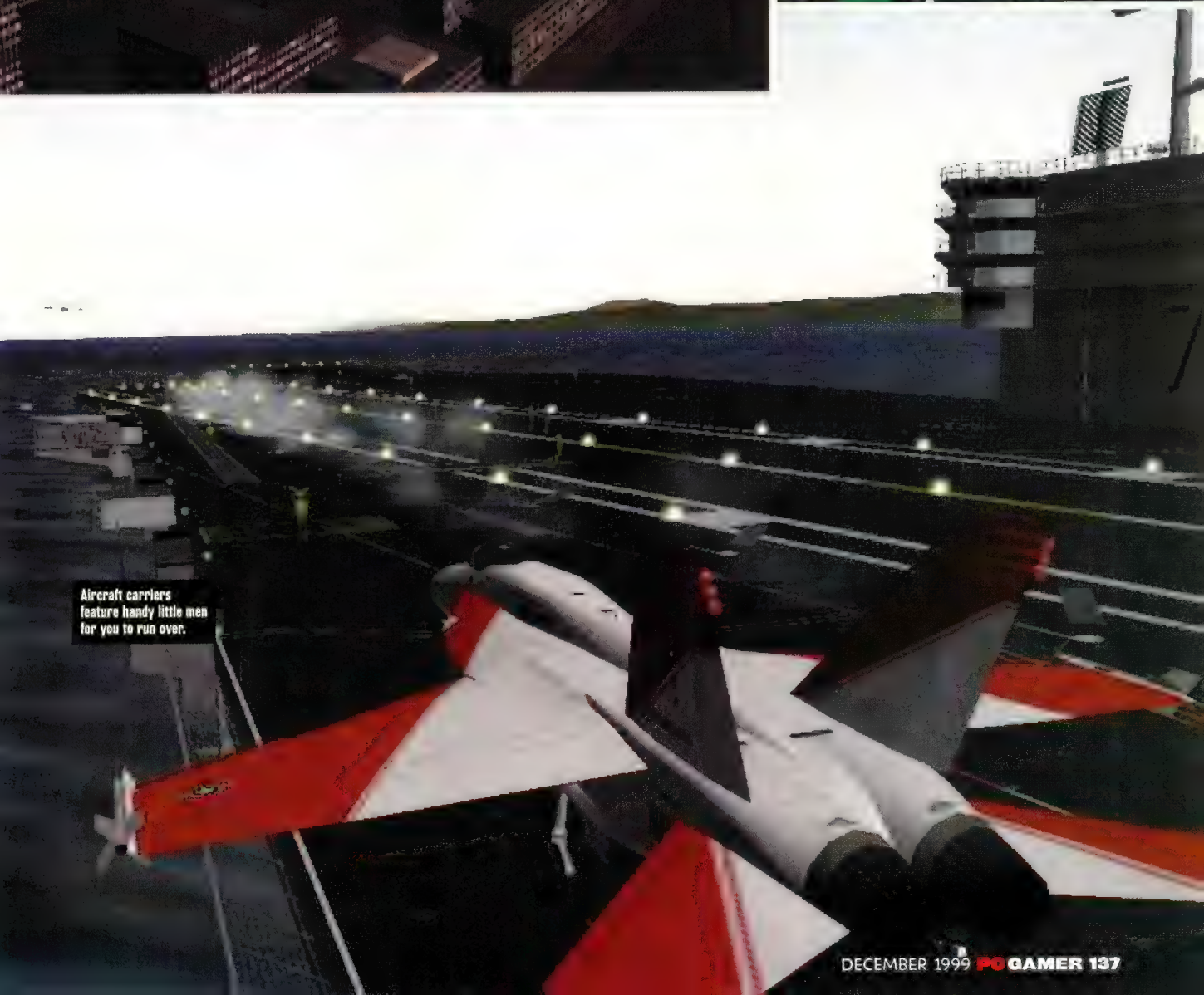
2. Entries arriving after 22nd November will be used to line the nose cone of our private jet.

3. Multiple entries are costly and unwelcome; please don't bother sending them.

4. Once the Editor's mind is made up, that's it. His decision is final. That's just the way it is.

The level of ground detail is always outrageously high.





Aircraft carriers feature handy little men for you to run over.

SUBURBAN SILLINESS RESULTS

'SUBURBAN SILLINESS HITS OFFICE – MULTIPLE FATALITIES.' 'EDITOR CRUSHED BY HEAVING POST-BAG'

HERE they are – the results of our Suburban Silliness compo. We've had a lot of pressure from local government officials and the press, concerned about you uncovering signs of urban depravity We're pleased to report you did a five star job. Indeed, you seem to have relished this opportunity to demonstrate to the PCG team just how twisted, gnarled and, well...odd you are. Here's the winner and some of those entries that would get a rosette saying 'highly commended' if we had any

CENSORED

There's comes a moment, in every chap's life, when you find yourself dazed, confused, and asking yourself some questions. Such as "Where am I? Whose Mona Lisa T-shirt am I wearing? Who are these men? And is it really that small?"

WINNER!

Cutlery from Heaven

Dear Chris Atkinson from Surrey,
Here's a new PC and loads of goodies...

Chris's entry has perched on the top of the 'what is it?' pile this month. We're all a bit foxed as to how the hell it happened and would be grateful for some info.

Suffice to say that we think it's excellent and anyone who spots a French blunder (at least, *we think* it's French) of this magnitude deserves to be drenched in wealth, riches, bikini-clad women, and, er... a new PC, courtesy of Microsoft.

AH, THE COMPOSITION

Beautifully put together, and excellent use of everyday urban features. One complaint though – obvious wasting of precious gaming time spent in the fresh air. And of course, we don't condone smoking at all. Oh no.

PLANE SILLY

We especially like the way that the plane appears to be about to pop into the service station for a tank of four-star, a pork pie and a can of Fanta.

YEAH, RIGHT

Sorry Alex, this drew no sympathy from the team since we thought you could have easily raised a load of dough by flogging the sax (probably worth a packet) and buying a more cost-effective instrument such as a kazoo instead.

UFN
UNOFFICIAL FOOTBALL NETWORK

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UFN's goal is to give you the most passionate, knowledgeable, timely and quirky football coverage on the planet. And because it's published by fans for fans, it's uniquely placed to bring you the most informed comment on Premiership football on the Internet. So whether you want to know about the latest transfer talks, kit design or player bookings, UFN is the only site you need.

Hit the net today at

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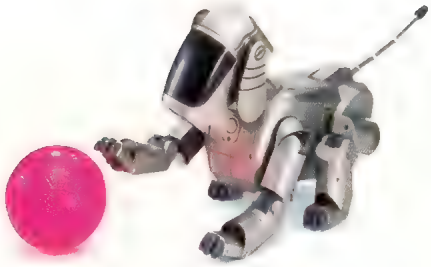
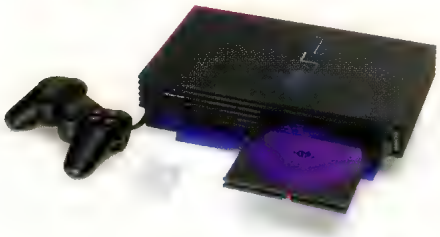
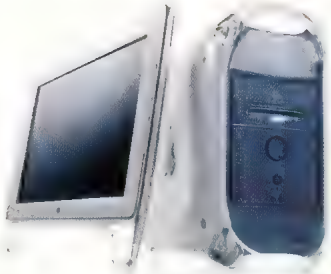
New







New

TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY TODAY
T3
At last! See Sony's next-generation console inside
We tried and were very very scared.
We play with Sony's new robot dog
Class of '99
The very best gear of the year, as chosen by the T3 team — and you!

www.t3.co.uk TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY TODAY T3

JOIN THE CLUB

NETWARE

One of the favourite multi-player services in the US finally gets a dedicated European launch. It's also time to get your own back on BT!

By STEVE OWEN

HEAT NET LOGIN
USER NAME
PASSWORD
HEAT Games Page
PLAY NOW!
BEFORE YOU LOGIN, CHECK OUT...
EVENTS CALENDAR
NEWS
HEAT.NET
FAST FREE ONLINE GAMING
FREE HEATNET DIAL-UP!
NEW USERS CLICK HERE
Hot 'n' steamy. PCG office? No – Sony's new Europe.Heat.Net
WON
www.won.net
New to WON?
Shining, sparkling, crispy fresh games. Get 'em here.
Need help?
Download HEAT software
Advertisers
Developers
Welcome To The World Opponent Network
Everything you want and need to know about on-line interactive entertainment. Play free games on-line!
New Tribes Demo Download Is Here
For those of you who haven't hopped onto the Tribes train yet, now is your chance. WON.net now has the long awaited Tribes demo from Dynamix. This demo contains three individual missions from the game which can be played on the Dynamix demo servers. Click here to get it.
Ship Date Locked In For Homeworld Launch - It's Gone GOLD
Sierra Studios & Relic Entertainment announced today that their long-awaited, award-winning PC game, Homeworld has gone gold and will be shipping to retail locations around the
PLAY GAMES NOW!
Choose from over 50 great games you can play now. All are FREE to play online and many require no CD-ROM. Check out the full list of available games here.
GET YOUR FREE GAMING HOMEPAGE ON PLAYERS.WON.NET!
Share your love of games with your friends and family by using our easy to use web site creation tools at WON.net's free homepage service. Click here to find out more.
CHAT, POST, AND WIN!
Swap information and opinions on our message boards, chat with players from all over. It's all available in the WON Lounge.
100'S OF DOWNLOADS
New free games, and add-ons for games you own. Neat new utilities, screensavers, and more. 100's to choose from in the WON Download Library.
READ NEWS AND REVIEWS AS IT HAPPENS
When will that game CD you've wanted finally release? And is it hot stuff or mindless fluff? Find out in Reviews from IGN and NEW WON.net Daily News

FOR too long Wireplay has enjoyed dedicated attention of Britain's on-line gaming community. Their BT-inspired desire for hard cash kept many of you at bay for a long time, even though it wasn't that expensive at weekends.

Thankfully, with the onset of free ISP, Wireplay saw sense and started offering the service for free, just before BT sold out. For more on that story have a nose at the 'BT Kiss WP Bye-Bye' box on page 144.

The US, conversely, has chopped and changed from one gaming site to the next, some offering gaming servers for an hourly or monthly fee, others offering it all for free. We Brits have not been allowed on because our transatlantic lines were so rubbish that we would just slow everyone else down. So be it. Thankfully, now that every ISP worth its salt has realised it's

FREEBIE-JEEBIES

The free ISP dust finally settles. It's time to assess the damage.

Some six months after that whole free ISP nonsense started going bonkers, we're wondering how you're all getting along.

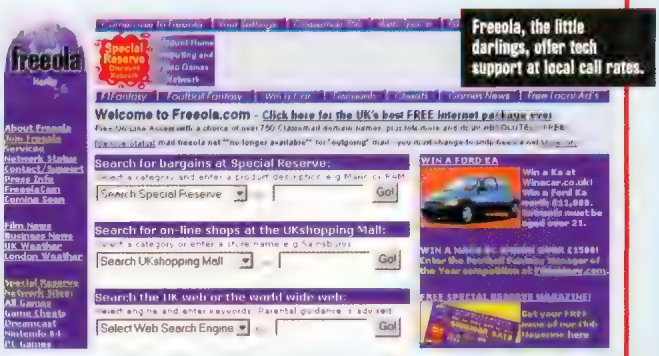
For instance, we were pretty impressed by Eidosnet when we reviewed them all a few months ago, but now the whole service is looking rather less stable. The number is becoming frequently engaged, the mail server is hanging during large attachment downloads, and the line can disconnect at inopportune moments. After attempting to resolve some of these issues with the technical support staff, we found them friendly, if not particularly knowledgeable – and at 50p a minute, in absolutely no hurry to get your problem solved.

Attempting a fix using the e-mail support brought a standard response that didn't help or even refer to any of the problems, and one particularly cheeky response saying it must be all our own fault. They then suggested we use the daylight-robbery-line instead.

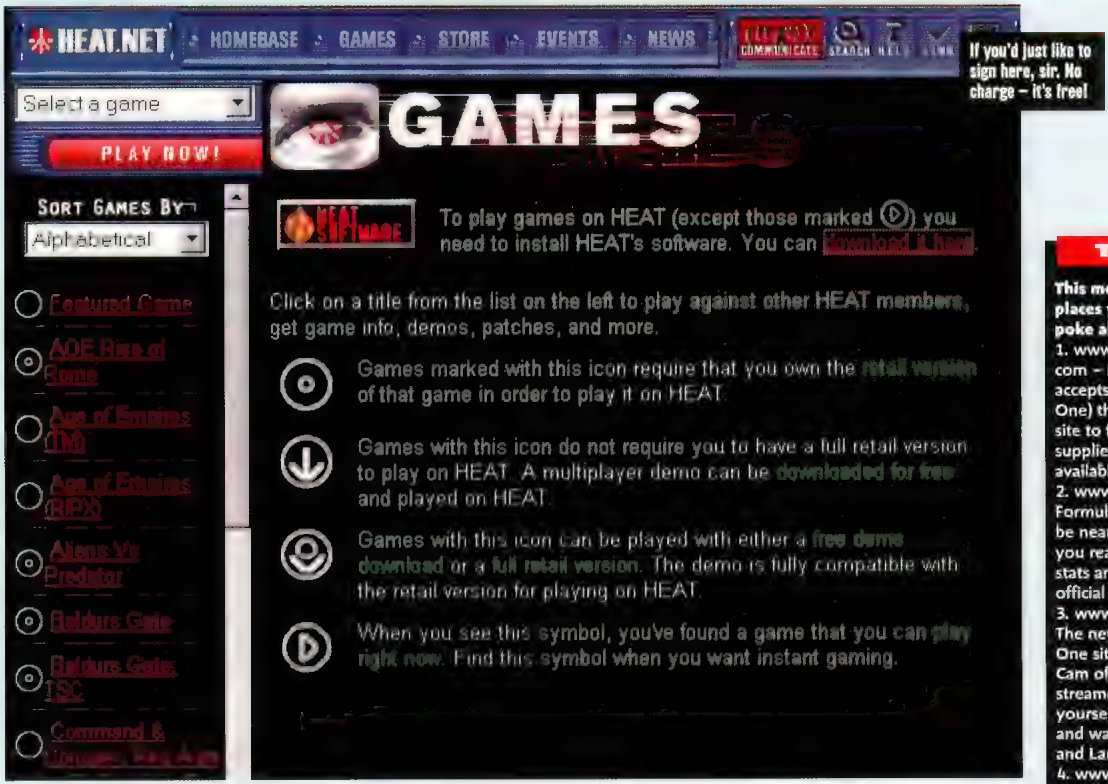
We did point out that all new ISPs were likely to be stable and fast at first, since they all enjoyed new investment, but that the big test would be further down the line. The big question is, as the services become more popular, are the companies expanding their hardware to accommodate new users? We'd like to hear about your experiences as the year goes on. Scrawl some E-mail with your complaints or praise to freeISP@permanent-inc.co.uk

We took a look at Freeola this month, a free ISP organised by well-known mail order company Special Reserve. They've been plastering adverts everywhere so you may have seen it already, but what we didn't realise is that technical support is on a local call phone number.

They also offer 25Mb of Web space, e-mail forwarding or auto-response for when you're away, faxes delivered as e-mail, e-mails delivered as faxes, and free faxing to the rest of the world. They are also working on dedicated game servers and already have over 750 different domain name addresses to choose from. Sign up at www.freeola.com, or get a CD by calling 01279 321321.


freeola
Welcome to Freeola.com
Search for bargains at Special Reserve:
Search for on-line shops at the UKshopping Mall:
Search the UK web or the world wide web:

Freeola, the little darlings, offer tech support at local call rates.


HEAT.NET
HOMEBASE
GAMES
STORE
EVENTS
NEWS
Select a game
PLAY NOW!
GAMES
SORT GAMES BY
Alphabetical
To play games on HEAT (except those marked) you need to install HEAT's software. You can
Click on a title from the list on the left to play against other HEAT members, get game info, demos, patches, and more.
Games marked with this icon require that you own the retail version of that game in order to play it on HEAT.
Games with this icon do not require you to have a full retail version to play on HEAT. A multiplayer demo can be downloaded for free and played on HEAT.
Games with this icon can be played with either a free demo download or a full retail version. The demo is fully compatible with the retail version for playing on HEAT.
When you see this symbol, you've found a game that you can play right now. Find this symbol when you want instant gaming.

If you'd just like to sign here, sir. No charge – it's free!

possible to take a chunk of the cost of a local call to provide Internet access to the British masses, word is spreading

Sony's successful Heat.Net, for instance, has been licensed in Europe by EGO Maniacs.net. The all-new Europe Heat.Net is available for players from the UK right now. We can also expect to be joined by new gamers from Switzerland, Holland, Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Spain by February 2000. Participation in the service requires signing up to Heat.Net's dedicated dial up network, but it's free, so that's OK Speed is of course, the issue, although you are allowed to experiment with your existing ISP for 30 days before having to use their own system.

Thanks to Heat.Net's US system, the European arm is already stable since it uses the existing network software The Yanks have signed up a huge number of titles, which us Euros now get to play on-line too. *Quake II* in all its forms is available, with *Quake III Arena* ready to go live shortly. Other gaming

THE TOP 5

This month's look at five places you might want to poke about on-line.

1. www.dvdpricecompare.com – If your DVD player accepts US discs (Region One) then you can use this site to find the cheapest US supplier for any DVD, either available or out soon.
2. www.itv-f1.com – The Formula One season should be nearly at an end when you read this. Get all the stats and the news at ITV's official Web site.
3. www.bbc.co.uk/radio1 – The newly developed Radio One site includes a Web Cam of the studio and streamed audio if you find yourself stuck in an office and want to listen to Mark and Lard, this is for you.
4. www.spacebastards.com – Rude Web site dedicated to a new puzzle game that needs to offend people to get noticed. (Check Matt's review on page 120.)
5. www.british-shopping.com – Get your Christmas shopping off to a flying start with this comprehensive list of British on-line stores.

COMPANY SITES

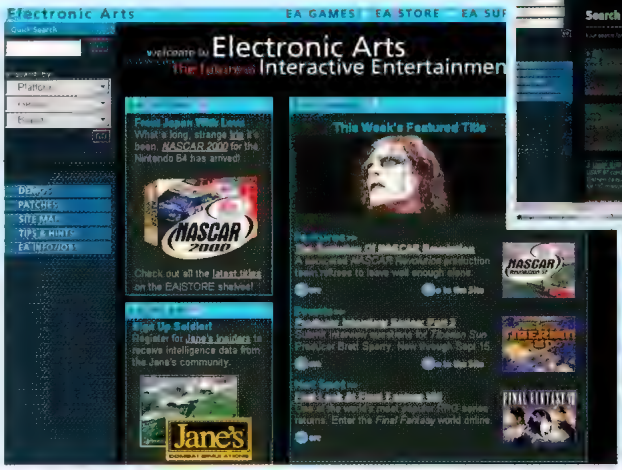
SITE STARE

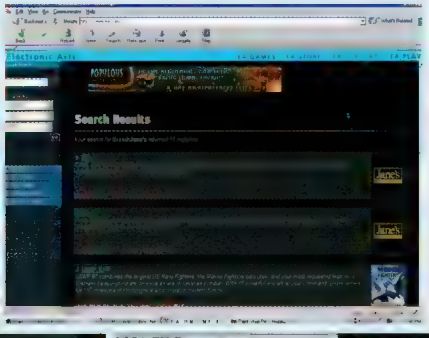
Les grandes fromages d'Internet...

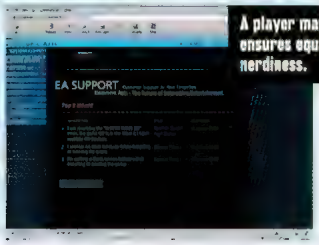
Electronic Arts

WHO? You might have heard of them. *FIFA 2000, Tiberian Sun, Need for Speed...*
WHERE? www.ea.com
WHY? EA's Multi-player match-up service helps you find players of your own ability, while dedicated servers support some of the later titles. Some hints and tips are provided, but for most titles there's just a US telephone number for charged cheats.

There's also a complete support network, using the same information that the technical support guys use. There's still no direct European support though.
PC GAMER score: 3/5







A player match-up ensures equality of nerdiness.

ISP NEWS

BT KISS WP BYE-BYE

The latest on the big sell-out.

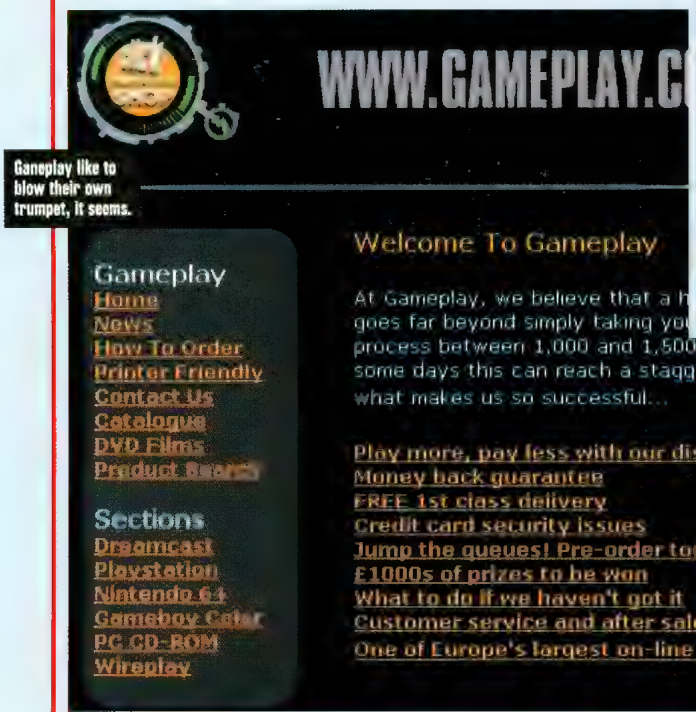
Last month British Telecom offloaded its gaming service Wireplay to Gameplay for around £5.5 million in Gameplay shares. Wireplay still exists, but under the Gameplay umbrella, which hopes to combine on-line gaming and Internet shopping for hardware and software across all formats.

Gameplay offers many of their range of products for less than high street prices and free postage.

£5.5 million for Wireplay seems like quite a bargain, which suggests that BT was keen to get rid of the service that's been beset with problems since its launch five years ago. It's been reasonably successful for the last two years, but still has a surprisingly small number of regular users, despite now being free.

However, Colin Daffy (part of the original BT management), is part of the new Gameplay team, so there's still faith that the service will succeed. Indeed, floating Gameplay on the Stock Exchange generated over £30 million. Gameplay can be found on the net at www.gameplay.com, and www.wireplay.co.uk still exists as well.

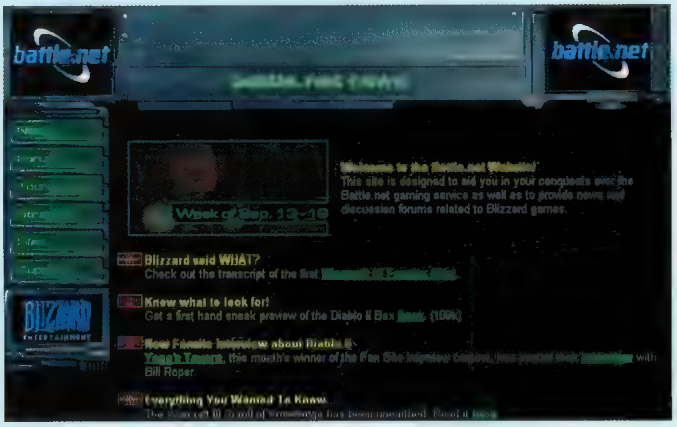
Happy gaming.



Gameplay like to blow their own trumpet, it seems.

WWW.GAMEPLAY.COM
Wireplay Gaming
Wireplay is Gameplay's free online gaming service.
www.wireplay.co.uk
Play your favourite PC games against your friends – and thousands of other people – over the Internet!
To access the Wireplay system you need to download and install the free Wireplay software. Click here to download it now (4 MB, Windows 95/98 only).
Wireplay supports over 100 PC games, more than any other online games service in the world. Here are the ten most popular games on Wireplay right now:
1. Half-Life
2. Quake II
3. Air Attack
4. MUD II
5. Quake 3 test
6. Quake
7. Unreal
8. Duke Nukem 3D
9. Bridge
10. Rise of Rome
IF IT'S AVAILABLE TO BUY, IT'S AVAILABLE AT

Cries of 'Hurrah' and a two finger salute to BT.


battle.net
battle.net
Week of Sep. 13-19
Blizzard said WHAT?
Check out the transcript of the first
Know what to look for!
Got a first hand sneak preview of the Diablo II Box
Everything You Wanted To Know

nighlights include *Age of Empires, Alien Vs Predator, Red Alert, Grand Theft Auto, Kingpin, Total Annihilation* and *Warcraft II*. The alternatives should balloon as the service takes off. Sign up for the fun at www.europe.heat.net

Not to be outdone, Havas Interactive, owners of Sierra, have something similar up their sleeves. Already the uncontested champions on the other side of the pond, Westwood's Battle.net server is now officially the most popular on-line gaming site in the world, with over 4.5 million active players using the service. The jammy dodgers also have one of the most popular general gaming servers in the world, with WON.net now enjoying 2 million active users.

Celebrating this, you can expect to see Havas launching European Battle.net and WON.net servers by the turn of the year. We'll bring you more on that as it happens

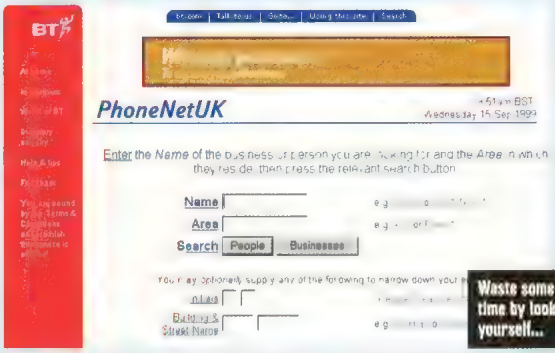
ESSENTIAL INFO

ROTTEN THIEVES

The title of this box clearly has nothing to do with British Telecom, the subject of the next couple of paragraphs.

It turns out that from 1st October, BT changed the charging system of directory enquiries (again). Rather than 50p for up to two numbers, you are now charged per minute, with consumer groups suggesting that the average cost will be £1.20 per query, including finding out that a number is ex-directory or just can't be found. God help you if you've lost your little black book.

Sod that. I'll keep the cash, thanks. Get your answer for free on the Internet at www.bt.com/phonenetuk.



Waste some spare time by looking up yourself...

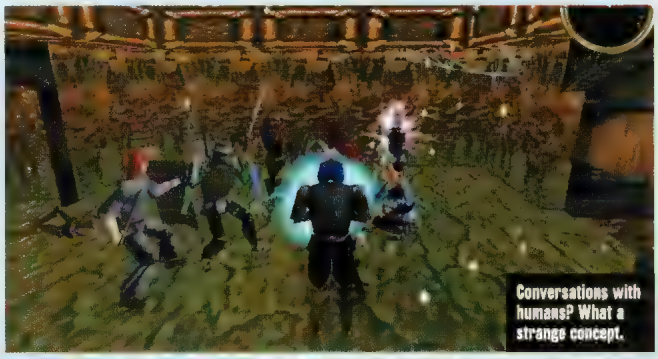
ON-LINE ROLE-PLAYING

MICROSOFT'S QUEST

Announcing the impending arrival of *Asheron's Call*.

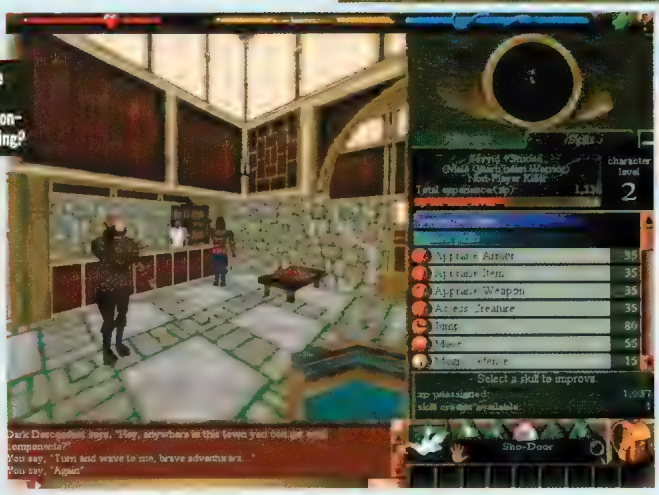
In just over a month's time Microsoft are hoping to join in the *Everquest* phenomenon when they release *Asheron's Call*. It's currently in private beta test, with a commercial CD release before Christmas.

Like *EverQuest*, it's a 3D role playing game accepting hundreds of people within the persistent world. The game provides a first person view of the land, which you can walk around using the cursor keys, look around with the mouse, and use menu systems for more advanced features. These include conversations



Conversations with humans? What a strange concept.

Can *AC* eclipse *Everquest*'s dominance of on-line role-playing?



with other humans and computer controlled characters, and solving tasks given to you by the game.

Servers are being handled by Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone (www.zone.com). There'll be a monthly charge, but this hasn't been fixed yet. If you want to find out more, the Zone has all the details.

AH, I WONDERED WHERE THAT WAS

Wireplay Direct
www.wireplay.co.uk

Barrysworld (mainly *Quake*)
www.barrysworld.co.uk

Game Spy
www.gamespy.com

MPlayer
www.mplayer.com

Eidosnet
www.eidosnet.co.uk

Novaworld
www.novalogic.com

Europe.Heat.Net
www.europe.heat.net

Blizzard's Battle.net
www.battle.net

World Opponent Network
www.won.net

Ultima Online
www.uo.com

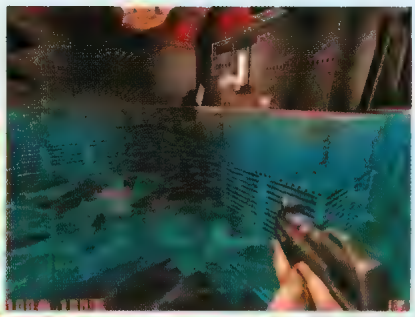
Everquest
www.everquest.com

Westwood
www.westwoodonline.com

Kali
www.kali.net

PC GAMER'S CHAMPION LEAGUES

Play on-line, win prizes, grow ego - it really is all very simple.



Ah, the railgun. It still provokes fond sighs in the office.

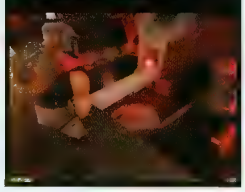
THE PRIZES

There is always a bribe. Top the league and you'll find yourself the proud owner of a TNT2 Ultra 3D card (courtesy of our friends at Creative: 01245 265265; www.creative.com). This graphics card is one of the best of the new breed, guaranteed to turbo-charge even the most ailing PC. It makes all the late-night competition worth it, doesn't it?

THE LEAGUES

Age of Empires 1v1
Hone your skills before *AoE II* comes to blow you away.
Quakeworld 2v2
Team play. Just be careful who you're shooting at. The heat of battle can have unfortunate friendly fire consequences.
Warzone 2100 1v1
Tanks a go-go in this fine real-time strategy game.
Quake 2 1v1
Duel to the death. With rocket-launchers, obviously.

Coming Soon!
Half-Life 1v1
Quake II free-for-all



OF course, the one question everyone's asking about this league is how on earth is it all organised. However, we can finally reveal its secrets: We use Championship Manager. Arf.

But, reluctantly putting aside football management games for the moment, we can firmly inform you that the mortal conflict and brutal toil continues apace in the PC GAMER leagues. And, of course, it's not too late for every single one of you (With an Internet connection, natch) to get involved. Simply decide which area of your gaming talents is strongest, then follow the instructions over the page. The current choice of digital battlegrounds are *Age Of Empires*, Quakeworld 2v2, *Warzone 2100* and *Quake II* 1v1, with even more games to be added very soon. Apparently.

Then every month we check who's generally kicking the world's collective backside, and get Wireplay to provide them with a sparkling prize, as described in the box at the top left corner of the page. No, not there. A bit to the left. That's the one.

And that's it. On-line slaughter's never been so simple, fresh and tangy, so make sure you join today. Unless you don't want to.

This looks rude. But it's really just ol' *Quake II*. Phew.

THE HALL OF FAME

The great and good get their slice of fame once more.

THIS MONTH'S SLAUGHTER TOOK PLACE BETWEEN **SEPTEMBER 1ST** AND **OCTOBER 1ST.**

AGE OF EMPIRES 1V1

PLAYERS	TOTAL WON	TOTAL LOST	STRAIGHT WIN	STRAIGHT LOSS	HIGHEST RANK
1. Tinker	8	6	2	0	1
2. Nannia	4	1	4	0	1
3. Holeshot	29	5	0	1	2
4. But Man	10	18	1	0	3
5. Shirl101	12	19	2	0	4
6. Cuillin	8	14	0	4	5
7. Veeda 99	6	0	6	0	7
8. Philhill	15	2	13	0	6
9. Moribund	11	0	11	0	7
10. Terra99	13	3	1	0	2

WINNER!

Name: Tinker
Real Name: Still unknown. Get in contact with us! We'll happily keep your prizes if you don't, you know.

QUAKE II 2V2

PLAYERS	TOTAL WON	TOTAL LOST	STRAIGHT WIN	STRAIGHT LOSS	HIGHEST RANK
1. Phoenix	8	0	8	0	1
2. Oblivion	3	1	2	0	2
3. Lobro	4	5	0	1	3
4. 666	4	0	4	0	4
5. Mad Hatters	5	2	0	15	
6. Coldfusuin	3	0	3	0	6
7. Curious Oranges	0	2	0	2	6
8. ITH	2	2	2	0	8
9. Special -ACE- Service		2	0	2	9
10. Metal	1	5	0	1	10

WINNER!

Name: Phoenix
Real name: Michael Rotchell and Mike Hughes.
Two wins in a row – so that's one prize each! Fair enough.

QUAKE II 1V1

PLAYERS	TOTAL WON	TOTAL LOST	STRAIGHT WIN	STRAIGHT LOSS	HIGHEST RANK
1. Sanguin	7	0	7	0	1
2. Dave	13	4	2	0	2
3. Amok	3	4	1	0	2
4. Bond	4	3	0	2	3
5. Skumbag	5	1	0	1	5
6. Acidicfish	6	12	3	0	4
7. Grassy	3	3	0	2	6
8. Atomic	2	0	2	0	7
9. Smokestak	0	2	0	2	8
10. Telly	2	0	2	0	9

WINNER!

Name: Sanguin
Real name: N. Hawkins.
"U all rock, but I rock more," says Mr Hawkins modestly. Still, you can't argue with 7 from 7.

AGE OF EMPIRES 1V1

PLAYERS	TOTAL WON	TOTAL LOST	STRAIGHT WIN	STRAIGHT LOSS	HIGHEST RANK
1. Solja	20	0	20	0	1
2. Atom Heart	26	5	6	0	1
3. Hay Bob	25	6	0	1	2
4. Sunburn	15	8	0	1	2
5. Wiseup	6	11	0	1	4
6. S&N	5	10	0	1	5
7. Dan D Man	0	3	0	3	6
8. Offcut	0	4	0	4	7
9. Grizzly Bear	5	10	0	1	9
10. Steve	3	4	0	4	8

WINNER!

Name: Solja
Real Name: Axel Mellars.
Another repeat winner. Time for a second PC to cope with your graphics card collection...

HOW TO PLAY

It's *this* easy, brave warrior...

The game of skipping rope got rather chaotic.

1 Firstly, you need to register. At the moment, the first three leagues are in the Power Play area of Wireplay, which requires you to have Wireplay as your ISP. This service is now free – to join up, simply pop CD GAMER Disc 1 into your computer and press the Wireplay button.

2 **You now need to register for the league you want to play in. Choose a nickname for yourself and stick to that monicker whenever you play. You're only allowed one account and one name on each ladder. This is partly a security measure and partly a way of keeping the ladder system dynamic.**

3 The ladder will only work if your details are entered correctly. You only need to enter your nickname and e-mail address, but if anyone else is to challenge you, the latter *has* to be a working address that you read regularly. If you're found to be entering any inappropriate or obscene information, or imitating another player, then you will be thrown off the ladder and barred from re-registering.

4 **Please don't register if you don't intend to take part seriously. If you play in a ladder match, you must use the ladder nickname you have registered; otherwise, you'll cause unnecessary confusion.**

5 Whenever you or your clan/team registers on a Wireplay ladder, you start at the bottom and are classed as an 'unranked' player/team until you play your first game. You can challenge any player you like (there are rules for challenging top-ten players – see later) and if you beat them, you climb half the distance between the ranks.

6 **For example, if you're in 100th place and someone else is 50th, when you beat that player you will climb the ladder to 75th. Your rank on the ladder does not go down if you lose a match – unless your opponent is ranked *directly* below you and he/she overtakes you.**

7 If a player lower than you beats someone higher than you, then you'll begin to move down the ladder. To keep your place or to move upwards, you must keep winning against higher-ranked players.

8 **To make a challenge, use the built-in challenge mechanism. This e-mails your opponent an official ladder challenge. Please do this only once per challenge to avoid clogging up the system. Anyone found to be spamming other players with abuse, multiple challenges or other useless e-mails will be permanently removed from the ladder.**

9 It's the responsibility of the losing player to report the result of the game. This is done by going to the ladder page and clicking the 'Log Loss' link. Whether you're in a team or are an individual, you must regard yourself/selves as one player (ie, you and your team-mates need to agree who's to register the team name and then report on behalf of the team). In 'free for all' matches (matches in which multiple opponents are all competing against each other without partners), each of the losers of the match reports a loss to the one overall winner.

10 **In setting a cut-off date each month, we will take the league standings and print them in our current issue. The person on top of the chart at that particular time will be declared the PC GAMER Champion of the Month and receive their prize shortly afterwards.**

SIGN UP!

HOW TO GET ON TO WIREPLAY ON THE CD

Wireplay is an on-line games network run by BT. Better still, it's free (bar the phone calls). However, there are some slight complications. If you want to experience the Powerplay part of the network – it guarantees the very best possible environment for on-line gaming, and it's where the first three Champion Leagues have been set up – then you'll have to sign up with Wireplay as your ISP.

This is still free, of course, but you must be a member to take part in Powerplay. To sign up, simply press the Wireplay button on CD GAMER 1.

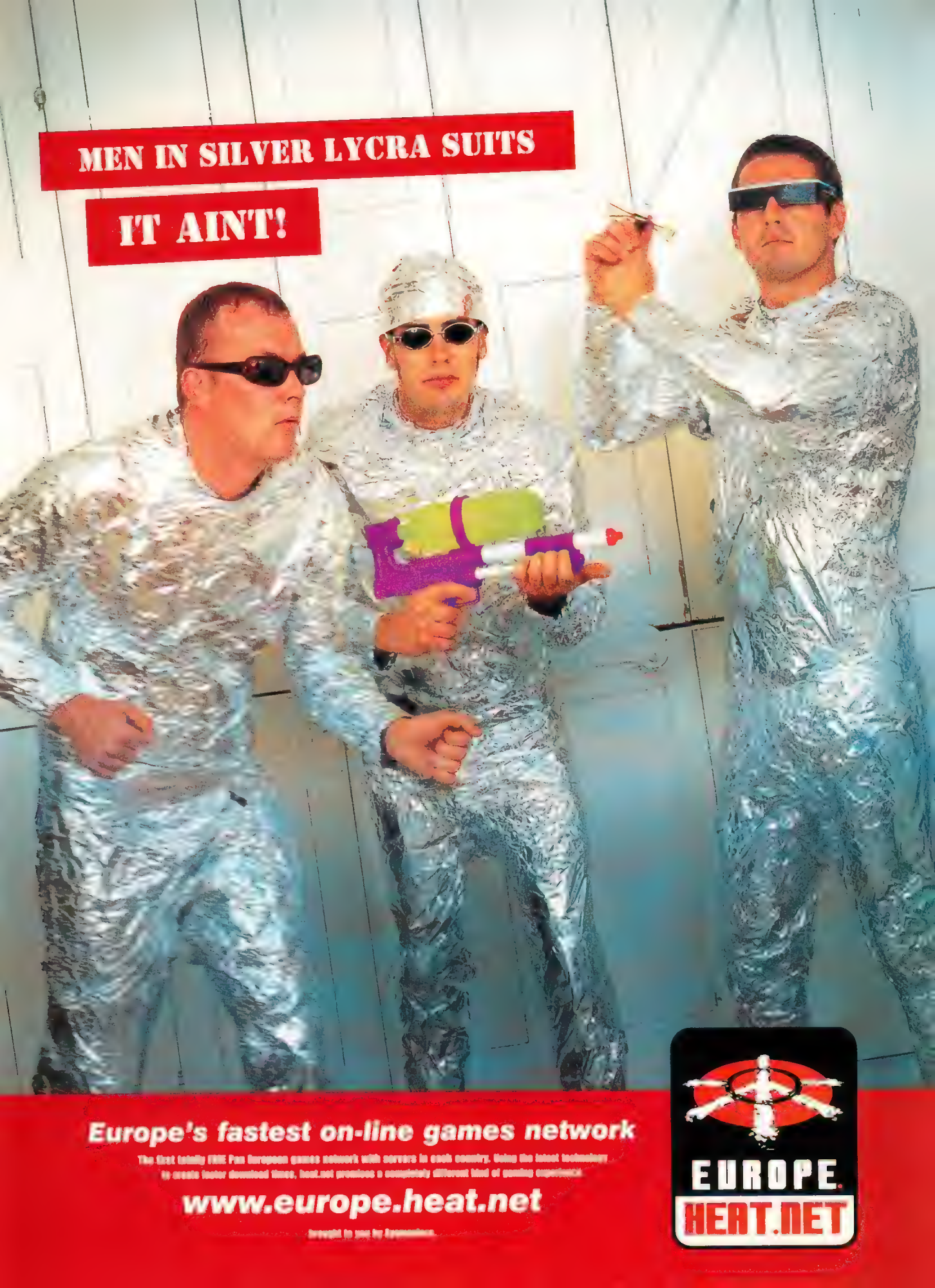
In future, there will be three PC GAMER Champion Leagues in the Freeplay area of Wireplay. These will be open to everyone regardless of their ISP, but as the games are in a non-dedicated area of the network, ping rates can't be guaranteed.

If you're already happy with your ISP, remember you can sign up to Wireplay and use it simply for playing games. Wireplay doesn't have to be your sole ISP – just use it when you play in the Champion Leagues.

Q&A

WHAT ABOUT..?

Included on CD GAMER 1 is a full text FAQ of every possible question you could wish to know. Merely start to install the Wireplay software on the same disk to be informed of your lusted-after information.


MEN IN SILVER LYCRA SUITS
IT AIN'T!
Europe's fastest on-line games network
The first totally FREE Pan European games network with servers in each country. Using the latest technology to create faster download times, heat.net promises a completely different kind of gaming experience.
www.europe.heat.net
brought to you by Ocean
EUROPE.
HEAT.NET

THIS MONTH, WE'VE BEEN MOSTLY PLAYING...

These are what we've been wasting our working hours on this month.

James: ***Rainbow 6: Rogue Spear***
"Grenade! GRENADE!"

Mark: ***Homeworld***
"I like big bangs."

Matt: ***GP 500***
"Just lean into it, baby."

Trevor: ***GP 500***
"Wheelie good fun. Ahem."

Kieron: ***System Shock 2***
"Scream, monkey!"

CONTACTS

Can't get hold of a game? Then give the publisher a ring:

ACCLAIM
0171 344 5000
ACTIVISION
01895 456789
CODEMASTERS
01926 816044
EIDOS
0121 356 0831
ELECTRONIC ARTS
01753 546465
GT INTERACTIVE
0171 565 7303
HASBRO/MICROPROSE
0800 328 7007
INFOGRAMES
0161 827 8060
MICROSOFT
0870 501 0100
NOVALOGIC
01753 546465
RAGE
0121 456 3123
SIERRA
0118 920 9100
TAKE 2
01429 855046
TLC/MINDSCAPE
0870 741 6821
UBI SOFT
0181 944 9000
VIRGIN/INTERPLAY
0171 368 2255

PC GAMER'S BIG GAME HUNT

Like some kind of sick and twisted Readers' Digest, here's the PC GAMER Big Game Hunt. We hope you like it.

MAYBE you're new to this PC gaming lark. Or maybe you're a seasoned RTS pro, but you've got no idea about, say, flight sims. Or perhaps you want to know when we ran demos of the five best first-person shooters.

You've come to the right place. These three pages are a condensed bible of all that's best in the world of PC gaming; from the best games in each genre to the best of each type of hardware. Six years ago this very month, PC GAMER was thrust upon an unsuspecting world, and we've been accumulating all manner of gaming knowledge ever since.

For each of our top rated games, we'll give you the briefest of overviews, plus tell you when we last ran demos, patches and tips.

Also, remember that CD GAMER 1 always holds our massive reviews and tips databases, so you can always find in-depth info about any game, not just the ones listed here.

Ah, the lovely world of hardware. No sooner have you got yourself all kitted out with the latest kit than new technologies come along and change everything. On the third page of the Big Game Hunt, you'll find the very best of each hardware category, from joysticks to headphones to graphics cards. If you've got £800 spare, this is where to spend it!

So just sit back, read, relax, and soak up the info. We'll keep the Big Game Hunt updated every month in line with the ever-changing face of the PC games world. See you next month!

TOP FIVE FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

1) HALF-LIFE
Publisher: Sierra Issue: PCG 63 96%
- **Tips:** PCG 66-67
- **Demo:** PCG 68 **Patches:** PCG 75,76
- **Extra levels:** PCG 70, 74, 75

You may have heard of this one. The most intensively choreographed first-person game ever. Utterly inspirational horror-based action. Play it to remind yourself why you own a PC.

2) UNREAL TOURNAMENT
Publisher: GT Issue: PCG 74 92%
Tips: PCG 75 **Demo:** PCG 76 **Patch:** None
Shock new? It was hyped as a multi-player shooter but it's also a revolutionary solo experience.

3) ALIENS VS PREDATOR
Publisher: Fox Issue: PCG 68 90%
Tips: PCG 71-72 **Demo:** PCG 68 **Patch:** PCG 73-74
An Alien. And a Predator. And a Marine. Killing each other in very scary ways. Yessss.

4) KINGPIN
Publisher: Virgin Issue: PCG 73 90%
Tips: PCG 75,76 **Demo:** PCG 70
Patches: PCG 75
Swearing, thieving, mugging and flamethrowers.

5) DELTA FORCE
Publisher: Novalogic Issue: PCG 67 90%
Tips: PCG 69 **Demo:** PCG 68 **Patches:** PCG 73
The predatory joy of the sniper-sights perfectly transferred to the PC.

TOP FIVE ACTION STRATEGY

1) HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS
Publisher: Take 2 Issue: PCG 71 93%
- **Tips:** PCG 75, 76
- **Demo:** PCG 70, 72
- **Patches:** PCG 74, 75

A potent brew of *Commandos*, *Delta Force*, *Rainbow Six*, *Laser Squad*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Cannon Fodder* and sheer heaven. And quite possibly better than them all put together.

2) BATTLEZONE
Publisher: Activision Issue: PCG 55 93%
Tips: PCG 56-57 **Demo:** PCG 70 **Patches:** PCG 73
A mix of RTS and tank action that only three people bought. Take a chance and be number four.

3) HEAVY GEAR 2
Publisher: Activision Issue: PCG 73 85%
Tips: None **Demo:** PCG 65 **Patches:** None
An interesting cocktail of soldier-sim tactics and robot-suit chaos. Charmingly eccentric.

4) ABOMINATION
Publisher: Eidos Issue: PCG 75 89%
Tips: None **Demo:** PCG 74 **Patches:** None
Zombified squad-based tactical shenan-gans. Wears its *X-COM* and *Syndicate* inspiration proudly.

5) RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR
Publisher: Take 2 Issue: PCG 75 85%
Tips: None **Demo:** None **Patches:** None
This sequel is a mite disappointing, but it's still top quality special ops stuff.

TOP FIVE RACING

1) GRAND PRIX 2
Publisher: MicroProse Issue: PCG 27 95%
- **Tips:** PCG 35
- **Demo:** PCG 37
- **Patches:** None

The oldest game on the Big Game Hunt list. And it's still our top racing game because the circuits have never been bettered. Geoff Crammond is, indeed, God.

2) MIDTOWN MADNESS
Publisher: Microsoft Issue: PCG 71 91%
Tips: None **Demo:** PCG 74 **Patches:** None
The most levathan software company on earth. The world's most sprightly game. Go figure.

3) TOCA 2: TOURING CAR
Publisher: Codemasters Issue: PCG 66 92%
Tips: PCG 68 **Demo:** PCG 68 **Patches:** None
If you can't stand *GP 2*'s old style graphics, come here. Luscious bumper bumping stuff.

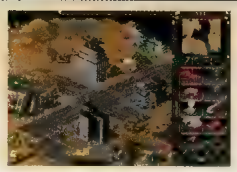
4) COLIN MCRAE RALLY
Publisher: Codemasters Issue: PCG 62 92%
Tips: PCG 64 **Demo:** PCG 63 **Patches:** None
Another reason why Codemasters are among the grand masters of PC racing.

5) GP 500
Publisher: Hasbro Issue: PCG 75 91%
Tips: None **Demo:** PCG 76 **Patches:** None
Blew Matt away, and is the cause of much two wheeled rivalry between him and Goat Boy.

TOP FIVE REAL-TIME STRATEGY

1) TIBERIAN SUN
Publisher: EA Issue: PCG 73 92%
- **Tips:** PCG 76 (Book)
- **Demo:** None
- **Patches:** None

As *Tib Sun*'s development process stretched interminably on, the people became restless. Forgive us for doubting you, great game god. Heal us with your mighty RTS fingers.



2) AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS
Publisher: Microsoft Issue: PCG 76 90%
Tips: None **Demo:** None **Patches:** None
Emp re building on a grand scale. Excellent mult play and cracking single-p ayer campaigns.

3) WARZONE 2100
Publisher: Eidos Issue: PCG 68 90%
Tips: None **Demo:** PCG 64
Patches: PCG 73,76
Adds ful, luscious 3D graphics to the basic RTS.

4) DUNGEON KEEPER 2
Publisher: Electronics Arts Issue: PCG 73 90%
Tips: PCG 73,74 **Demo:** None
Patch: PCG 75,76
A thing of beauty, the best at being bad.

5) HOMEWORLD
Publisher: Sierra Issue: PCG 75 78%
Tips: None **Demo:** None **Patches:** None
Space based 3D RTS of much beauty. Awe inspiring battles involv ng space spaghetti.

TOP FIVE TURN-BASED STRATEGY

1) CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER
Publisher: Activision Issue: PCG 67 92%
- **Tips:** PCG 71
- **Demo:** PCG 74
- **Patches:** PCG 73-74

The real sequel to *Civ II* will have to go some to surpass this. As delicately beautiful as a lone rose and as clever as Einstein and Hawking.

2) ALPHA CENTAURI
Publisher: Electronic Arts Issue: PCG 67 91%
- **Tips:** [illegible] **Demo:** PCG 68
- **Patches:** PCG 73

Lacks the human element of *Civ CTP*, but that's all.

3) HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III
Publisher: Ubi Soft Issue: PCG 70 87%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 70 **Patches:** None

Not RPG, not strategy game. It's both. It's brill [illegible] graphics.

4) X-COM: APOCALYPSE
Publisher: MicroProse Issue: PCG 46 93%
- **Tips:** [illegible] **Demo:** [illegible] **Patches:** None

X-COM finally flirts with real time, but it's a turn based gal at heart.

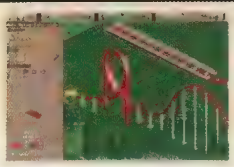
5) STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION
Publisher: Hasbro Issue: PCG 71 88%
- **Tips:** PCG 73 **Demo:** None **Patches:** None

Very slow, yet very deep and satisfying. A brooding monolith of a strategy game.

TOP FIVE MANAGEMENT

1) ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON
Publisher: MicroProse Issue: PCG 68 91%
- **Tips:** PCG 70
- **Demo:** PCG 69
- **Patches:** PCG 70

This is the perfect lazy Sunday game. Except it's so addictive it rapidly becomes an early morning Monday game. Buy it, and lose sleep.



2) SIMCITY 3000
Publisher: Electronic Arts Issue: PCG 66 92%
- **Tips:** PCG 69 [illegible] **Demo:** PCG 69
- **Patches:** None

I think this was a real city it would be Heaven.

3) CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3
Publisher: Eidos Issue: PCG 69 90%
- **Tips:** PCG 70 **Demo:** PCG 70 **Patch:** PCG 73/76

Football stats in game form. Marvellous, if you like that kind of thing.

4) RAILROAD TYCOON II
Publisher: Take 2 Issue: PCG 64 86%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 63, 71 **Patches:** PCG 65

[illegible] be the man who makes rail fares [illegible] experience.

5) GANGSTERS
Publisher: Eidos Issue: PCG 64 87%
- **Tips:** PCG 68 **Demo:** PCG 67 **Patches:** PCG 71

The bad boy of the management games world. Al Capone would have approved.

TOP FIVE RPG/ADVENTURE

1) MONKEY ISLAND TRILOGY
Publisher: LucasArts Issue: PCG 51 94%
- **Tips:** PCG 53
- **Demo:** PCG 51
- **Patches:** None

Three games in one. Simply the funniest, best designed, most thoughtful point-and-click adventures ever made.

2) GRIM FANDANGO
Publisher: LucasArts Issue: PCG 62 95%
- **Tips:** PCG 65 **Demo:** PCG 62 **Patches:** None

Another LucasArts adventure. That's our shorthand for Another Classic Adventure.

3) BALDUR'S GATE
Publisher: Interplay Issue: PCG 65 89%
- **Tips:** PCG 68 **Demo:** PCG 62 **Patch:** PCG 73

The purest translation of Dungeons And Dragons to the PC. Huge, involving and very, very traditional.

4) FINAL FANTASY VII
Publisher: Eidos Issue: PCG 59 93%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 60 **Patches:** PCG 62

The console mega-game on the PC. Enough to make you grow an enormous [illegible].

5) OUTCAST
Publisher: Infogrames Issue: PCG 72 90%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 72 **Patch:** PCG 74

Arty, [illegible] pretentiousness, yes, but still the year's most conscientious attempt to break new ground.

TOP FIVE SPACE SIMULATORS

1) CONFLICT FREESPACE
Publisher: Interplay Issue: PCG 60 92%
- **Tips:** PCG 62, 64
- **Demo:** PCG 64
- **Patches:** PCG 62

Having completed *Alliance* we now find that the superative joys of *Conflict Freespace* are burning more fiercely in our memories.

2) X-WING ALLIANCE
Publisher: LucasArts Issue: PCG 69 94%
- **Tips:** PCG [illegible] **Demo:** PCG [illegible] **Patch:** PCG 73

[illegible] Mission Disk [illegible] the Death Star in the [illegible] of the *X-Wing* saga.

3) X-COM: INTERCEPTOR
Publisher: MicroProse Issue: PCG 58 90%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 59 **Patches:** PCG 73

The *X-COM* alien fighting dynamic transferred into spaceships. Great base management.

4) HARDWAR
Publisher: Gremlin Issue: PCG 60 86%
- **Tips:** PCG 63 **Demo:** PCG 60 **Patches:** None

The [illegible] Elite, one that everyone [illegible] RPG elements. Not perfect, but [illegible] through.

5) I-WAR: DEFIANCE
Publisher: Infogrames Issue: PCG 76 80%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** None **Patches:** None

Updated version offers loads more missions, but be warned, they're [illegible] hard.

TOP FIVE FLIGHT SIMULATORS

1) FALCON 4.0
Publisher: MicroProse Issue: PCG 67 91%
- **Tips:** None
- **Demo:** PCG 53
- **Patches:** PCG 71

Falcon 4.0 achieved the [illegible] impossible by beating *Total Air War* and dominating the genre with its excellent graphics and campaigns.

2) F/A 18E: SUPER HORNET
Publisher: Titus Issue: PCG 76 91%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** None **Patches:** None

Behind the [illegible] a beautiful shiny game with [illegible] and guns. Sets a new standard.

3) MIG ALLEY
Publisher: Empire Issue: PCG 74 91%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 75 **Patches:** None

WWII dogfight intimacy meets modern jet speed in the skies over sleepy Korea.

4) FLIGHT UNLIMITED 3
Publisher: Electronic Arts Issue: PCG 76 92%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** None **Patches:** None

The most realistic flight sim ever. No guns, and limited [illegible] view, but still [illegible].

5) APACHE HAVOC
Publisher: Empire Issue: PCG 64 91%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 67 **Patches:** PCG 69

Cause havoc in an Apache. It's another title saves it all sim, only a Havoc is a Russian chopper.

TOP FIVE ON-LINE/MULTI-PLAYER

1) UNREAL TOURNAMENT
Publisher: GT Issue: PCG 74 92%
- **Tips:** Next issue
- **Demo:** None
- **Patches:** None

Multi-player arena carnage so divine you can hardly believe it's real. Because it's not. It's *Unreal*. *Quake III*'s probably doing just that.

2) TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
Publisher: Sierra Issue: PCG 70 85%
- **Tips:** PCG 71 **Demo:** PCG 70/75
- **Patch:** PCG 76

Surprise on-line fave of 1999. Kieron's still King Spy.

3) QUAKE II
Publisher: Activision Issue: PCG 51 96%
- **Tips:** PCG 53 **Patches:** PCG 66 **Demo:** PCG 57

Rated by many as the closest multi player gaming has come to an art form.

4) EVERQUEST
Publisher: Sony Issue: PCG 71 85%
- **Tips:** None **Patches:** None **Demo:** None

More act on one-tenth [illegible] Online and about 80 times as pretty.

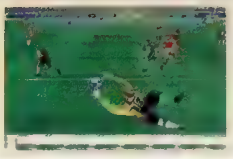
5) ULTIMA ONLINE: THE SECOND AGE
Publisher: Electronic Arts Issue: PCG 72 85%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** None **Patches:** None

It's an entire world that lives only on the Net. Strange, and strangely [illegible].

TOP FIVE SPORTS

1) FIFA 99
Publisher: Electronic Arts Issue: PCG 64 90%
- **Tips:** PCG 67
- **Demo:** PCG 66
- **Patches:** None

The football game is marching steadily towards perfection, and *FIFA* is the apogee of the genre. It can kick it, yes it can.



2) JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL
Publisher: Virgin Issue: PCG 61 87%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** None **Patches:** PCG 73

The joys of the six-pocketed table, minus the beer stains and fag ash.

3) CRICKET WORLD CUP 99
Publisher: Electronic Arts Issue: PCG 71 86%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 73 **Patches:** None

The sound of leather on willow. Tea, cucumber sandwiches, long lunches and England losing again.

4) NHL 2000
Publisher: EA Issue: PCG 76 80%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 76 **Patches:** None

The best ice hockey game on the PC. Incredible that [illegible] effort wasn't much different.

5) LINKS LS 99
Publisher: Eidos Issue: PCG 64 90%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 67 **Patches:** PCG 73

A good walk spoiled... but a game. It's a (hnqqqh) hole in one, and the best golf game around.

TOP FIVE MISCELLANEOUS

1) GRAND THEFT AUTO 2
Publisher: Rockstar/Take 2 Issue: PCG 76 90%
- **Tips:** Next Month!
- **Demo:** PCG 76
- **Patches:** None

A spectacular collision between cutting-edge game design and knife edge social outrage. The original's still pretty good, too.

2) SYSTEM SHOCK 2
Publisher: EA Issue: PCG 75 92%
- **Tips:** PCG 76 **Demo:** PCG 75 **Patches:** PCG 76

Genre defying fear 'em up which had Kieron entranced for days. Not like normal then.

3) THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT
Publisher: Eidos Issue: PCG 65 90%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 68 **Patches:** PCG 73

Simply the best sneak 'em up on the PC. *(The only one, surely? – Ed)*

4) WORMS ARMAGEDDON
Publisher: MicroProse Issue: PCG 67 90%
- **Tips:** PCG 69 **Demo:** PCG 68 **Patches:** None

Semi turn-based hot worm on worm action. You don't need no stinking ed.

5) WETRIX
Publisher: Infogrames Issue: PCG 60 86%
- **Tips:** None **Demo:** PCG 62 **Patches:** None

A kind of water-based Tetris, and the best puzzler for several yea[illegible].

TOP FIVE: RUBBISH STORY-LINES

1) *Pod*
It's the end of the world. You can win a place on the last ship off the planet if you win races in your car. Utter drivel.

2) *Quake*
"While scouting the neighbourhood, you hear shots back at the base. Damn, that Quake bastard works fast!" Enough said.

3) *Re-Volt*
OK, so the toys are so advanced that they have a life of their own. And with this God-given gift they choose to... race around in circles all day.

4) *The X-Files*
Given the series' normal standard, this was astoundingly bad.

5) *The Phantom Menace*
[Snip! – Legal advisor]

ON THE CD

Full reviews of all the games featured here can be found on CD GAMER 2.

PC GAMER'S RECOMMENDED HARDWARE

What would a PC be without a full complement of shiny gimmickry? These are our recommendations for all your PC gaming hardware needs. Get your wallet out!

TOP FIVE: HEAVILY-DISGUISED GAMES

Some games are, clearly, spreadsheets in disguise. Here are the top five suspects.

1) *Wall Street Trader '99*
Playing the stock market, without the risk. Or fun

2) *Stars!*
Dull space-oriented exploration and

3) *Tactical Manager 2*
Football, without balls. But nice stills of players.

4) Excel
There's a flight sim hidden inside this popular spreadsheet, y'know.

5) *Deer Avenger*
There's actually *nothing* behind this game.

CONTACTS

If you want further information about any of the gadgets on this page or are having problems finding a stockist, you can contact the manufacturers directly.

MICROSOFT
0345 002000
www.microsoft.com

LOGITECH
0181 308 6582
www.logitech.com

MATROX
01753 665500
www.matrox.com

SENNHEISER
01494 551571
www.sennheiser.com

DIAMOND
01189 444477
www.diamondmm.com

CREATIVE
01245 265265
www.creative.com

RECOMMENDED JOYSTICK

WINGMAN INTERCEPTOR
Logitech £50 Issue: PCG 69 91%

- Reasonably priced for such a high-quality stick.
- Lots of buttons, switches and throttle controls.
- Simple set-up system to program functions.

RECOMMENDED STEERING WHEEL

FORMULA FORCE
Logitech £150 Issue: PCG 72 90%

- Striking, robust design.
- Subtle feedback for the discerning driver.
- Works well with non-Force Feedback games.

RECOMMENDED JOYPAD

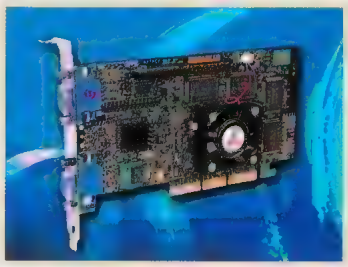
WINGMAN GAMEPAD EXTREME
Logitech £35 Issue: PCG 76 91%

- G-Force Tilt motion-sensing technology.
- Loads of buttons and excellent D-pad.
- Great-looking, ergonomic and easy to install.

RECOMMENDED 3D CARD

MILLENNIUM G400 MAX
Matrox £187 Issue: PCG 72 No score

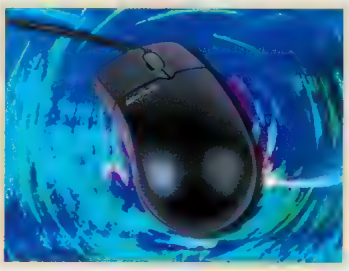
- Unconventional; ready for tomorrow's games.
- Absurdly fast, and with 32Mb RAM.
- Best combined with a Pentium III.



RECOMMENDED MOUSE

USB INTELLIMOUSE
Microsoft £35 Issue: PCG 72 92%

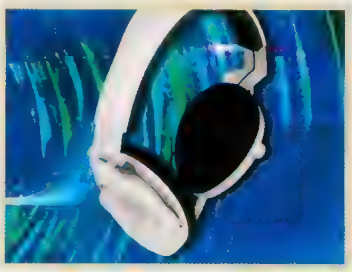
- Classic example of what a mouse should be.
- Exemplary build quality, and a great colour.
- Wheel is useful once you get used to it.



RECOMMENDED HEADPHONES

MEDI@COUSTICS M@H80
Sennheiser £50 Issue: PCG 73 90%

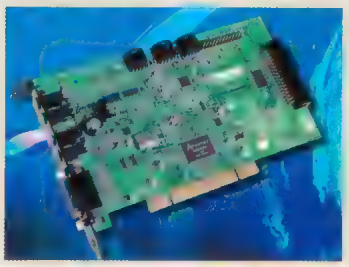
- Top quality from a top brand name.
- Comfortable and well-designed.
- Excellent sound reproduction and 3D positioning.



RECOMMENDED SOUND CARD

MONSTER SOUND MX300
Diamond Multimedia £59 Issue: PCG 71 94%

- Full 3D sound, including up and down positioning.
- Supports all major 3D audio standards.
- Gives shockingly realistic presentation of sound.



RECOMMENDED MODEM

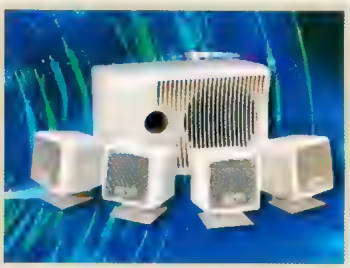
SUPRA EXPRESS 56e PRO
Diamond Multimedia £79 Issue: PCG 64 89%

- Full and easy support of V90 and k56Flex.
- Good price for a powerful, accessible modem.
- It's got an extremely entertaining name.

RECOMMENDED SPEAKERS

PC WORKS FOUR POINT SURROUND SYSTEM
Creative Labs £70 Issue: PCG 64 89%

- Four satellite speakers allow realistic 3D sound.
- Excellent sound quality.
- Meaty sub-woofer. Feel the bass.



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GUIDELINES

TIPS GUIDE

ON THE CD

After my beautiful maps last month, you would have thought the powers that be would have seen fit to let me do the second part of our *Hidden And Dangerous* guide. But no, Tim Cant was the lucky man. Instead, I've come up with the definitive introduction to the delovely *System Shock 2*. Hope you like it.

Finally, we've finally got the last part of Mark's *Kingpin* tips. Sorry we didn't run them last month, but, erm... James, why *didn't* we run them last month? *(Damn, I would have gotten away with it too. Pesky Writer. – Ed)*. Oh. Sorry.

PLAYING GUIDE – PART 2

HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS

Covered in filth? Bullets whistling past your head? It could be a night out in Harlow, but it's just the second part of our *Hidden And Dangerous* tips.

By TIM CANT

1

CAMPAIGN TWO: OPERATION SILVER GATE

MISSION FIVE: LAST COURTESY

10 So, you've destroyed the Zelezna Vrata lock and made it through the enemy camp. Things can't get any trickier can they? Of course they can. Being the final part of Operation Silver Gate, Last Courtesy is quite a tester. Your team have to create covering fire so their aircraft can land, board the 20 plane and escape. High shooting scores are obviously a bonus for this mission, and you'll need a sniper in your team for sure.

As soon as the mission starts head for the shed with your whole team in tow. Grab the weapons

30 inside, making sure you get the machine gun. Get out of the shed and get the machine-gun guy to cover you while you snipe the approaching soldiers as quickly as possible. It's imperative you don't let them get near you.

Watch yourself, because after about half a minute a machine-gun-equipped motorcycle attacks from the front. You'll want one guy to defend you from the rear, as 40 after a while you'll get a group of six enemy soldiers coming from behind. Once they're dispatched, however, you can devote all your resources to the frontal assault.

When the music starts you know that it's just a matter of time before your plane lands. After it's turned board it from the side facing away from the shed. Hurry - if it 50 take off without you you'll have to replay the mission. If there are any baddies left use the plane's turning gun tower to finish them off. As soon as the plane starts moving you're out of there. Phew! Don't get complacent though, chum, as some fiendish missions are just around the corner.

60

CAMPAIGN THREE: FIEND'S CALL

MISSION ONE: FIRE PORTAL

The Allied top brass want the V2 factory destroyed – we imagine 70 that everyone drank far too many

FOUL PLAY

COLIN McCRAE RALLY

To celebrate the re-emergence of dear old Colin on budget, here are some handy cheat codes once again. Don't attempt a power-slide without one.

LOTTOWIN – Bonus Cars
BEEFCAKE – Cellos GTI
HIPPO – Concept rally car
GIANTLEAP – Low gravity
BORROWERS – Micro Machines mode
TURNBACK – Rear wheel steer
ONTHEBALL – Mirrors everything
DELOREAN – Hovercraft mode
INTHECLOUDS – Enables secret tracks
DARKSIDE – Drive all stages at night
BACKAGAIN – Drive all the tracks backwards
FREEWAY – Unlock all stages
PASSENGER – Gives Nicky control
WHITEOUT – Runs all tracks in fog
PRESSPASS – Pedal power
CHORDGY – Gives Nicky a squeaky voice
ROCKETMAN – Turbo boost
BIGGUNS – Double power
ALIENGOO – Jelly car
ALLWHEELS – 4WD steer

PATCH OF THE DAY

As you're probably aware, *Hidden And Dangerous* isn't the most stable game, and we'd advise you install the latest patch you can get your hands on before attempting to play the thing. They seem to be churning out new ones all the time, and hopefully the v1.2 patch on CD GAMER will ease any problems you might be having with the blighter. It can still be a little temperamental, though, so save often to avoid premature hair loss.

at the last Christmas party, and the resulting vomity mess was so bad they wanted to make sure it could never happen again. This particular mission sees you attempting to destroy the archives in the enemy HQ, as well as rescuing some important hostages. A sniper and three submachine-gunners will do you right for this mission – no need for bazookas, machine-guns, or any of that heavy stuff

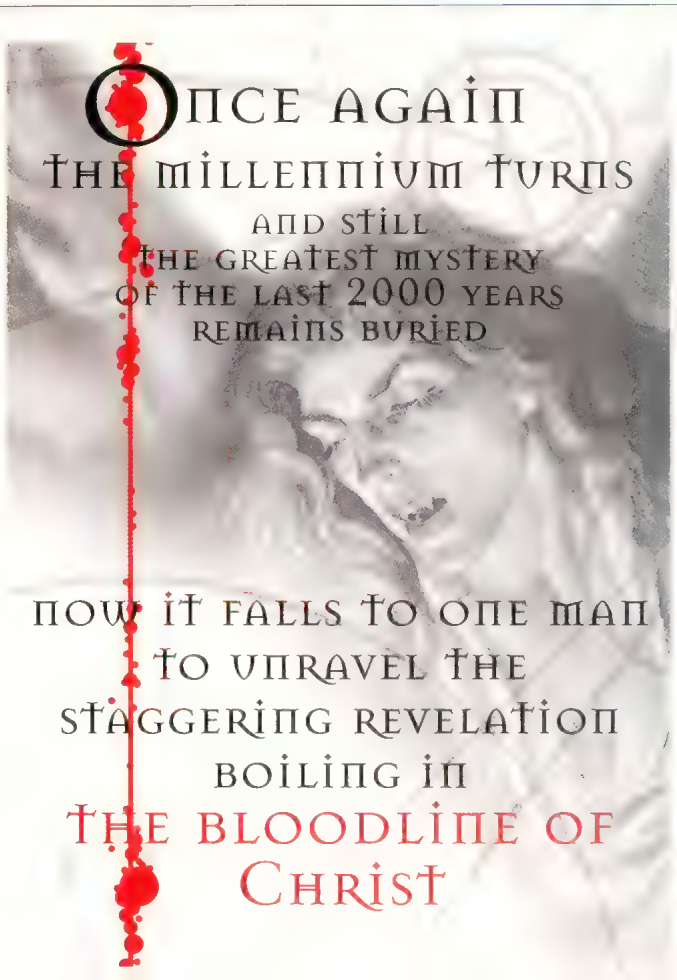
You start off in the attractive park area. Head along the path leading the group with a sub machine gunner. There are two soldiers to take out in these hedgerows, and when you reach the building snipe the officer on the balcony.

When the two patrolling soldiers appear zap them and any reinforcements that might arrive. Once you've taken out all the enemy soldiers outside and your soldiers have stopped firing, enter the house via the main entrance. Shoot any resistance as quickly as possible and once you've cleared all the rooms on this floor head up the stairs.

Blast any guards you encounter, and once again clear all the rooms before proceeding to the right of the main staircase. There's a secret entrance to the spiral staircase that takes you to the loft. Clear all the rooms, then plant explosives in the archive rooms (the ones guarded by troops) and head down to the basement. The guards you'll kill here have the keys necessary to free the pilots, and once you've unlocked their cells get them to follow you to the exit to complete the mission. Don't let them get killed, mind, or you'll fail the mission

MISSION TWO: TRAP KEY

Time for a nice bit of kidnapping. Colonel Steiner is hanging out at his villa with a



FOUL PLAY

BLOOD 2: THE CHOSEN

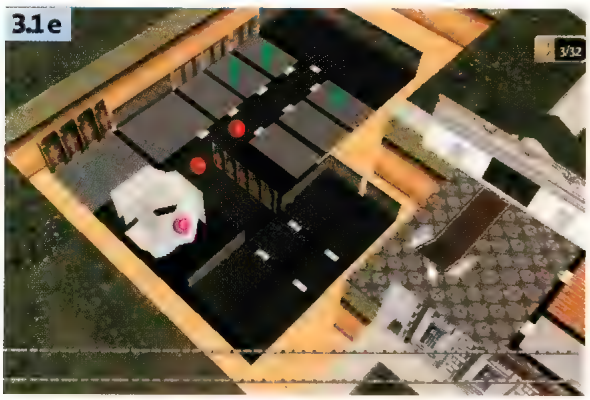
Fortuitously chosen to appear in the budget section of this month's reviews, *Blood 2* offers... well... blood. Lots of it in fact, so here are some cheats in case you fancy a bit more claret with your dinner. Press 'T' during the game, and type one of the following.

MPGOD – God mode
MPKFA – All weapons
MPAMMO – Full ammo
MPCLIP – Spectator mode (no clipping)
MPHEALTHY – Fills up your health
MPWHEREAMI – Displays your coordinates
MPHIDEME – Hides your coordinates
MPBEEFCAKE – Increases power (more guns)
MPKILLEMALL – Kills all monsters on level
MPSPEEDUP – Increases your speed
MPSTRONGER – Increases your strength
MPCALEB – Changes your character model to Caleb
MPOPHELIA – Changes your character model to Ophelia
MPISHMAEL – Changes your character model to Ishmael
MPGABBY – Changes your character model to Gabrella
MPBERETTA – Gives you the Beretta (type twice for dual weapon)
MPSUBMACHINEGUN – Gives you the Schmeisling-gun (twice for dual weapon)
MPFLAREGUN – Gives you the Flaregun (twice for dual weapon)
MPSHOTGUN – Gives you the Sawn-off Shotgun (twice for dual weapon)
MPSNIPERRIFLE – Gives you the Sniper Rifle
MPHOWITZER – Gives you the Howitzer
MPNAPALMCANNON – Gives you the Napalm Cannon
MPSINGULARITY – Gives you the Singularity Generator

large number of uniformed young men, and you've got to go in there and get him out whether he likes it or not. It's another building-based mission, so leave the machine-gunners at home. Note: your boys are dressed in fetching German uniforms now, so don't fire unless you're sure the target's not one of your team

First, head down to the villa and set up your sniper by the perimeter fence. Zap the soldiers on the veranda, then take out the one operating the spotlight. Once the guards patrolling the grounds come into view, snipe them too. Finally, drop any guards by the gate and head inside via the French windows. Head left, go through the first door and shoot the two soldiers. Throw a grenade into the hall, and once the smoke has cleared head in and blast any surviving soldiers. Clear all the rooms, then head upstairs.

Go through the study to Steiner's bedroom, and kill his body guards. *Don't* shoot Steiner because without him you can't



complete the mission. Now clear this floor. Once *all* Steiner's bodyguards have been dealt with he'll co-operate with you.

MISSION THREE: VIPER'S NEST

Getting the hell out of the underground factory is your main priority for this mission, but any wanton destruction to the baddies' equipment is a bonus. It's yet another no machine-gun mission, so tool up with a sniper rifle and submachine-guns

This mission starts off in Steiner's office, in the middle of the soldier-infested underground factory. Things aren't looking good. Steiner has activated the alarm, and soon you're going to get attacked by a bunch of soldiers. Kill Steiner if you can, but it's not vital to your success. Wait in the office and blast the first wave of soldiers that arrive, then move into the outer office

CHEAT YOURSELF SICK

So, you've read the tips, but you're still terrible. We couldn't possibly condone this kind of thing, but when all else fails, you could always try cheating. Check out this list of cheat codes that may or may not work on your version of the game. Try typing IWILLCHEAT or IAMCHEATER on the title screen, then give these codes a go while you're playing the game. Some codes might not work on particular versions of the game, but most of them seem to be fine whatever patch you've got. When a code works you'll hear a 'click' sound, so if you don't hear anything chances are you've either mis-typed it or the code won't work.

allitems – Makes every item available
allloot – Makes every item available
quickload – Loads your saved game
cantdie – Turns god mode on
debugdrawwire – Wireframe mode
enemyf – Skips to enemy view
funnyhead – Large head mode
gamedone – Completes the current mission
gamefail – Fails the current mission
goodhealth – Gives you full health
killthemall – Kills every enemy
laracroft – Transsexual mode
nohits – Turns god mode on
openalldoor – Opens every door
playercoords – Displays your co-ordinates
resurrect – Brings dead team members back
showtheend – Shows the end-game movie

and set up inside the doorway. You can also use the furniture in this area for extra cover.

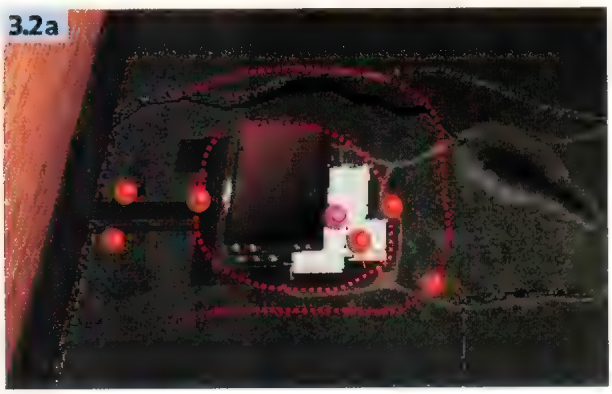
You'll get fired on by soldiers, and eventually one will hit the storage tanks, which will result in a massive explosion. This will kill a good number of baddies, but there are probably a fair few left. Head to the exit slowly and carefully, taking cover wherever possible. Once you've reached the exit the mission is over.

MISSION FOUR: ESCAPE FROM HELL

You're trapped in an enemy labour camp, and you've got to steal one of their vehicles and leave via the front gate. Ridiculous? Certainly. Yet again there's no room for machine-gun mayhem in this mission (so tool up with a sniper rifle and submachine-guns like before), and it's important not to overload your troops as they've got to pick up enemy weapons in order to stand a chance in the next mission.

Start by wasting the nearest guard and sniping the tower right ahead of you. Next head along the fence to your left until you can get a shot at the second machine-gun tower. Follow the path round to the right until you see a closed gate and an entrance leading right. There's a tower at the end of that entrance's path, so spray it with a few bullets to get the attention of the guard. When he comes down to take you, blast him. Do this to the next two towers.

Head to the car park, but be wary of the enemy soldiers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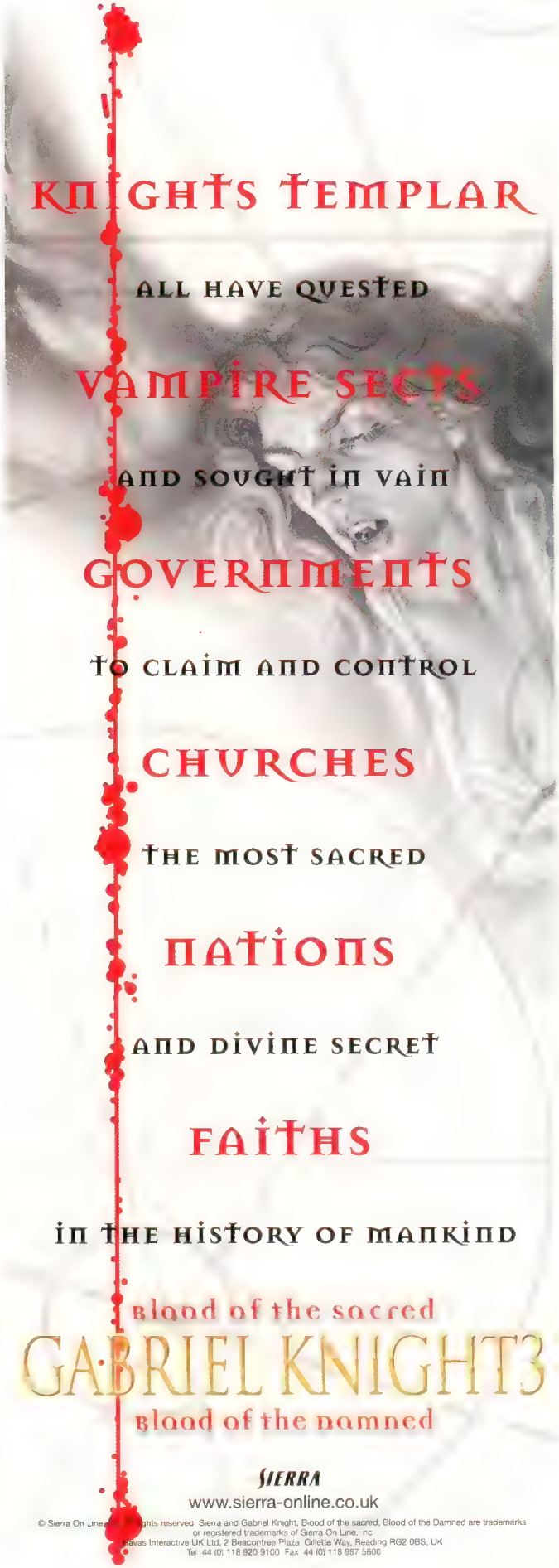
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ALL HAVE QUESTED
VAMPIRE SECTS
AND SOUGHT IN VAIN
GOVERNMENTS
TO CLAIM AND CONTROL
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CORPSE YOU CAN, MALCOM

Searching freshly murdered bodies is often frowned upon in polite society, but let's face facts: dead people have little use for their personal belongings once they've started pushing up daises. That's why we here at PC GAMER can't wait to start searching the still-warm bodies of recently machine-gunned German soldiers – who wouldn't?

Of course, we're not just doing it because we find it slightly arousing. Lordy no, the main reason is because often the bad guys are carrying better weapons than your troops, and by liberating these deadly tools you can turn their firepower to your advantage. For example, the German sniper rifle has a much further range than the standard one, plus it's likely it'll come with some handy spare ammo.

Another thing worth bearing in mind that if one of your team gets shot while they're carrying an important weapon or item, you might just be able to pop back to the place they died and grab it. Not particularly pleasant, but then again war probably isn't either.

FOUL PLAY

BLOOD 2: THE CHOSEN (CONTINUED)

MPASSAULTRIFLE – Gives you the Assault Rifle
MPBUGBUSTER – Gives you the Bug buster
MPMINIGUN – Gives you the Minigun
MPLASERRIFLE – Gives you the Cobalco Laser Rifle
MPTESLACANNON – Gives you the Tesla Cannon
MPVOODOO – Gives you the Voodoo Doll
MPTHEORB – Gives you the The Orb
MPLIFELEECH – Gives you the Life Leech
MPGOSHOPPING – Gives all items
MPNICENURSE – Gives +25 health
MPREALLYNICENURSE – Gives 300 health
MPWARD – Gives 25 armour

who'll attempt to bundle you at this point. If you can, shoot the barrels at the far end of the compound to take out loads of soldiers. Now head into the car park, grab the Panzerfaust leaning against the hut and open the gate. Jump into the half-track and drive out slowly – your machine-gunner will take out any remaining enemies as you go. Once you've escaped from the camp, get out of the half-track and arm yourself with the panzerfaust.

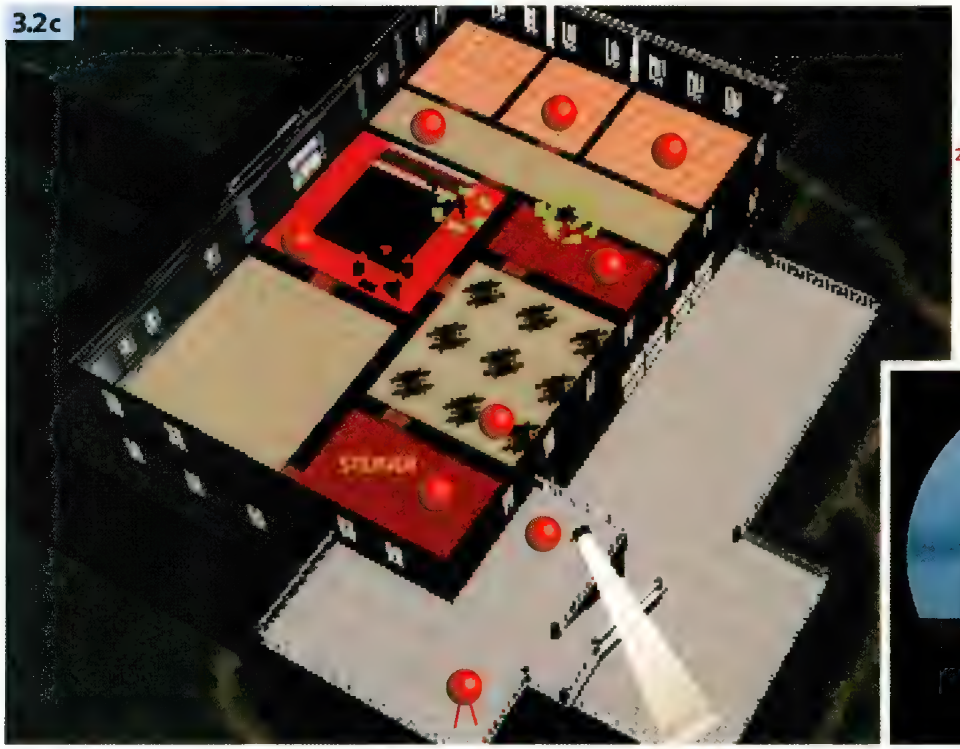
Creep towards the checkpoint and take out any guards you can – if you take too long they'll mine the bridge. As soon as the soldiers are dead, destroy the tank with rockets and cross the bridge in the half track to complete the mission

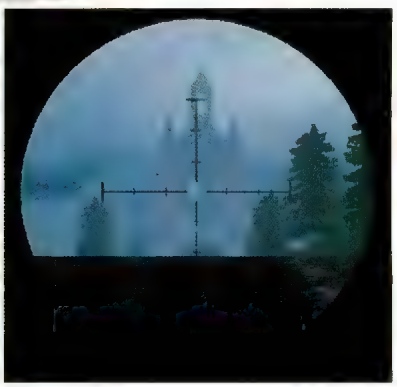
MISSION FIVE: CLOSE FIRE

So you're out of the camp, but you're still far from safe. There's a huge great tank coming up your rear, and ahead lies another enemy camp. Frankly, it's difficult to see how you're going to deal with this one. Sadly there's no 'surrender and hope they're nice to you' option in this version of *Hidden And Dangerous*, so it looks like you're going to have to go for it.

A sniper is a necessity on this level, as are big, burly guys to deal with all the anti tank weaponry you need to stand a chance of surviving. Most importantly, Close Fire is a special mission – there's no map screen, so you're going to have to rely on your own super sharp shooting skills and shouted commands. To aid you, PC GAMER scouts have been sent into the uncharted territory deep behind enemy lines to bring you these snaps of areas and enemies.

As soon as the level starts you're being pursued by a tank, so time is of the essence. Quickly, hop into the half-track and start burning it down the road until you get to the bit of road that cuts through the hillside. Get your bazooka or panzerfaust guy to run back the way you came and blast the tank before it can start shelling the rest of your team. Once it's history head on through the forest, taking care to deal with any enemy troops along the way (see picture 3- ⇨





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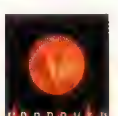

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FOUL PLAY

BLOOD 2: THE CHOSEN (CONTINUED)

MPNEWCROWARE – Gives newcroward [illegible]
MPCARBONFREE – Gives Willpower Powerup
MPTAKEOFFTHEBOI – Makes you invisible
MPNEWDAMAGE – Gives Triple Damage Powerup
MPBLAHBLAHBLAHGUNS – Gives a nice selection of weapons

EMERGENCY: FIGHTERS FOR LIFE

This one prompted something of an emergency in the office last month: a rush for the door as we didn't have to remain in. Fortunately, some key [illegible] Walker was on hand.

At the [illegible] screen, position your cursor over the 'options' button and simply type 'deliverance'. You'll then have your pick of all the missions.

5a). Once you come to the beach section at the entrance to the enemy base you'll clap eyes on the first of many tanks (3.5b).

The best way to deal with these is to use two soldiers to make a break for it in an attempt to get a square rocket shot at the tank's back or side. While you're attempting to take it out make sure your other troops and half track aren't in the tank's range or it'll get them. Repeat this process with the next two tanks and snipe any soldiers you see. There are three more tanks at the exit of the enemy camp (3.5c), and these should be destroyed in the same way as the first batch. On leaving the camp you'll want to scout ahead with a sniper in order to deal with the machine-gun motorcycle (3.5d). The sniper should also take out the guardhouse nearby.

Once it's rendered harmless follow the road until you come to the path cut into the hill on the left (3.5e). Follow it, and use a sniper to zap the panzerfaust guys in the village (3.5f). There are a few more troops guarding the road to the exit, but if you're cautious you'll have no trouble reaching the chateau (3.5g) and the end of the mission. Hurrah!

MISSION SIX: CRYSTAL FALCON

This is the final mission of the third campaign. You're nearly out of Germany, but you're being followed by an army of tanks and infantry so huge it's almost stupid. Nearly seventy troops and two massive tanks are your foes here, and if your four presumably knackered guys can defeat them you're pretty damn good, basically.

The objective of this mission is to mine the road leading to the pier, kill all the enemies and make it

to the seaplane in order to escape. Tool up your troops with machine guns, bazookas, land mines, ammo and anything else that takes your fancy. Remember, there's a helluva lot of Germans all gunning for your buttocks in this mission, and the plane's not going anywhere until every last one has kicked the bucket. Lots of ammo is extremely important

At the start of this mission you get three minutes before the enemy catches up with your escaping ass. Use this time wisely by sending your soldiers to the pier to grab all the supplies. You'll get a bunch of anti-tank mines, a pair of machine-guns, and a pair of bazookas. Pick up the anti tank mines and send a couple of your soldiers to lay mines to the left of the half-track on the dirt patch.

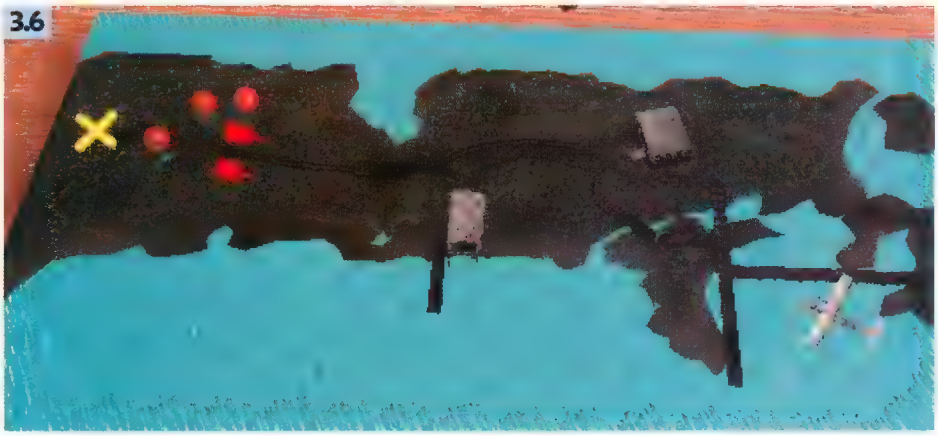
Now get one of your bazooka men to hide on the hillock near the half-track, and the two remaining guys to the hill behind the shed. These soldiers should use submachine-guns, and can be backed up with your last guy equipped with a machine-gun.

After the three minutes are up, the enemy assault starts. If any tanks get through the mines you just laid, take them out with the bazooka guy. Your other soldiers should concentrate on the soldiers *Don't* let the tanks or soldiers get to close, because if they do they'll start firing shells and grenades at you respectively

Once the tanks have been destroyed pull your bazooka guy back to join your other troops, and if enemy troops get too close use the machine-gun in the shed When all the enemy soldiers have been killed head for the Catalina Board it to escape from Germany and complete the campaign

So, the V2 menace is no more, and your soldiers are safely aboard their seaplane. They can't rest for long, however, as next month we're off to the icy wastes of Norway for the most challenging *Hidden And Dangerous* campaign yet. PC

Still itching for more? 'Course you are. We'll be polishing off the Norway campaign in the Christmas issue, then finally moving on to the North Sea and Czechoslovakia.



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PLAYING GUIDE

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Fed up of your 'ad shock' solutions? We provide some more concrete advice.

By KIERON GILLEN

Just because *System Shock* isn't that long certainly doesn't mean it's *easy*. Make enough mistakes and bad judgements and you can make the game almost impossible for yourself. This guide's main aim is to help you avoid such an error by giving you the gift... of knowledge.

FOUL PLAY

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant. Role-playing, first-person shooters, character development, arse-kicking free beer game ideas stolen and *Dangerous*...

Buy *System Shock 2*. Then don't use these cheats, as they'll only spoil your game. Oh, go on, then. In the game hold Shift and ~ then type: 'summon_obj [item]', where 'item' is one of the phrases below. You'll receive an appropriate item.

medical kit
psi amp
wrench
pistol
shotgun
assault rifle
laser pistol
ap clip
he clip
standard clip
pellet shot box
rifled slug box
large source booster
detox patch
psi booster
reflex armor
french-symbiote device
portable battery
maintenance tool
hack soft v1
repair soft v1
research soft v2
modify soft v3
EMP bolts
Electro Shock
Grav Launcher
Stasis Field Generator
Fusion Cannon
Crystal Shard
Viral Pistol
Worm Launcher

You can also try these codes:

psi_full – Gives full psi points
ubermensch – God-like
add_pool – Gives additional
build_pool points
show_version – Displays
version in game mode
toggle_hrv – Toggle hrv
panel
cycle_ammo – Cycle through
available ammo types

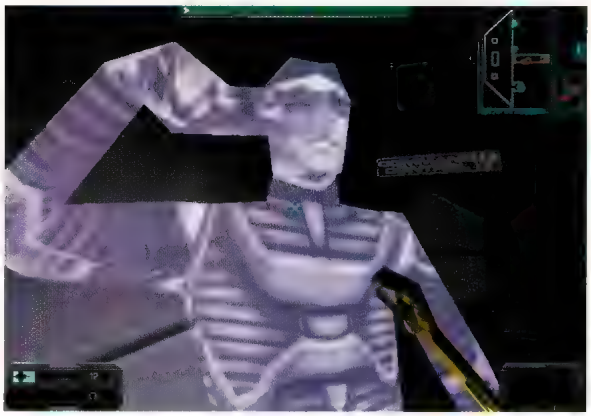
1 WHICH CHARACTER?

If you want the easiest life, join the Navy then branch out into other combat skills. Marines initially lack the maintenance skills to polish their weapons, and the psionic OSA's approach is far less standard than the other two. The Navy can access both the sealed crates, thus
10 gathering extra needed supplies, and turn off the security systems to stop you setting off alarms. All are playable choices, as long as you put some forethought into your...

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Whatever you do, whatever you buy, in *System Shock 2* you'll
20 *always* wish you made a different choice. The worst thing you can do is to panic when you're unable to use an object then spread your development over a wide number of skills you don't need. It's best to play for a few hours to discover what sort of player you are, then concentrate in those areas.

To learn a new skill is relatively
30 expensive. Then it's cheaper for the next two levels, before increasing at an almost exponential rate to make the final steps. Hence, you should plan ahead: if you don't really care about ever handling the assault rifle, don't advance standard weapons above three.



STATISTICS

40 Early on you'll have a far easier time if you concentrate some of your cyber-modules on strength. This will allow you to take out whining hybrids with a single whack of your wrench. It also increases the size of your inventory, making object management easier.

The other stats are, initially, less important. High agility allows
50 you to dodge more successfully Endurance will boost your maximum health, and careful management of your healing options can remove this as a real pressure. Cybernetic affinity and psi are primarily for those who wish to specialise in the technical or psionic aspects of the game: If you don't, don't waste your modules.

60

TECH SKILLS

HACKING

Lots of people would argue that this is the one skill you *can't* do without. They're wrong, natch. I completed the game on my first
70 run-through without purchasing it until *just* prior to the climax. Playing without Hacking is a real challenge, demanding that you're constantly on alert for cameras: their whirring noise is quite distinctive.

Conversely, it's probably the single most useful and variable skill in the game, in both power and its variety of applications. Once you've
80 taken it to level 4, which is possible very early if you specialise, you can hack turrets when you've turned the security system off. This allows you to create killing zones to lure foes into. If you're able to take over two turrets beside each other then this is *incredibly* effective

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

90 It's immediately apparent how quickly ranged weapons degrade This means that unless you're going to be a psionic or melee specialist, these two skills are going to become your very best friends. However, early in the game, due to cyber module shortage, you're going to have to make some hard
100 decisions on which to develop

Maintenance will boost the condition level of a weapon when you apply a repair-tool, but when

you possess a low skill the increase will be almost negligible. Conversely, repair will, even at the lowest level of skill, boost a weapon's condition from level 0 (Jammed) to 2. If you can master the interface enough to use the skill during combat, this makes repair initially the more useful and points-effective

If you choose to follow the maintenance route, it's best to pile on the cybermodules as quickly as you can to make it actually effective. At level four it becomes potent enough, and stops you having to worry about repairing your pistol while a Rumbler's trying to gnaw off your head

RESEARCH

Somewhat ironically given its rather swotty name, this is, along with repair, the technical skill that a hard-core marine should pay serious attention to. Why? Because the result is usually a damage bonus or access to a sparkling new piece of technology. The limit is that most objects require chemicals from a storeroom before you're able to discover their secrets

Upon starting your investigation you'll be informed of what you'll need. Then check your logs to find the inventories of various store-rooms and see if you can locate one. You'll have to lug around the item until you find the requisite compound

MODIFY

Marines will probably like this one too. It increases the potency of your weapons at the cost of nanites. However, it's not a skill for the early game. To make full use of it, you need to spend points in cyber-affinity, raising the skill above the bare minimum to increase your chance of success. If you don't, you'll lose a lot of precious nanites in failed attempts. Research is a smaller investment as its success is certain even with much lower skill levels. Of course, real high-cyb navy specialists can take it without a care. The ponces

WEAPON SKILLS / WEAPONS

WRENCH

Minimum: A hand to hold it in. Once, a mere workman's tool. Now: all that stands between you a horde of ravening hybrids. Like all the hand-to-hand weapons, works far better if you have a high strength (increasing damage).

STANDARD WEAPONS PATHWAY

This development path is completely dependent upon the availability of ammunition. Equally, everyone apart from the OSA starts with some training in it, making it an attractive one to follow to its conclusion. The variety of ammunition allows you to outfight just about everything else in the game once you know what variety of slug is most effective against certain monsters.

TALON M2A3 PISTOL

Minimum: Standard 1
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 1/1/1
The first weapon you find, and a capable workhorse for most of the game. Only becomes obsolete when you acquire an assault rifle, which uses the same ammunition and fires harder. Alternative fire's a three-round blast, which is especially good for quickly leaning around a corner and destroying stationary targets, such as turrets.

SHOTGUN

Minimum: Standard 3
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 3/1/2
More powerful at short range than a pistol and uses its own unique ammunition type. While the shotguns you scavenge from hybrids are jammed, each contains a single round of ammunition. By unloading you can slowly harvest extra shells. It all adds up. And the alternative fire mode's great for surprise attacks.

M-22 ASSAULT RIFLE

Minimum: Standard 6, Strength 4,
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 4/2/4
A fully upgraded assault rifle firing on full auto is just about the most versatile weapon in the game. Use armour-piercing to reduce security robots to iron filings. Anti personnel rounds punch big holes even in rumblers. The most important skill to cultivate is discretion. Positioning your

FOUL PLAY

SYSTEM SHOCK 2 (CONTINUED)

toggle_compass - Toggle compass view
query - Query cursor L = on R = off
split - Split cursor L = on R = off
check_jump_power - Jump
look_cursor - Puts cursor into 'look' mode
reload_gun - Reloads weapon out of inventory
swap_guns - Switches primary and secondary weapons
wpn_setting_toggle - Toggles between weapon settings
select_pulsenet - Brings up the pulsenet selection MFD
stop_sound - Stops any currently playing sound/log
clear_teleport - Clear any existing teleport marker
quickbind - Bind a quick slot
quickuse - Activate a quick slot
use_obj - Use an object by name
msg_history - Toggle message history
play_current_log - Play an unread log
toggle_mouse - Switch between mouselook and cursor modes

DELTA FORCE

It seems there's still a while to go before you get to play *DF2*, so here are some codes to previous titles in the original. Of course, nothing could be more fun than sniping hostiles in the eye, but maybe that's just a personal preference. Bring down the console by hitting ~ (usually left of the '1' key) and type in one of the following:

iwillwin - God Mode
rainofbullets - Unlimited Ammo
d - Auxiliary (3 shots)
takeme - Unlimited Ammo
close - Remove Last see you

FOUL PLAY

CARMAGEDDON 2

After playing *Carmageddon 2* for a bit last week, James went on a rampage in his car. He's now trying to sell it to get rid of the evidence, but he needn't worry: being a Spitfire, it only managed to lightly bruise the pedestrian and scare some sheep. Have some cheat codes:

TILTY – Pinball mode
WATERSPORT – Underwater ability
LEMMINGIZE – Stupid pedestrians
STIFFSPASMS – Mud and corpses
WOTATWABAM – Greased tyres
SMARTBASTARD – Completes the race
MRMAINWARING – Pedestrian Panic
BIGDANGLE – Mutant bell
WETWET – Credit bonus
TINGTING – Free repairs
STOPSNATCH – Timer toggle
MOONINGMINNIE – Lunar gravity
CLINTONCO – Hot rod
FASTBAST – Turbo pods
STICKYTYRES – Wall climber
GOODHEAD – Peds with stupid heads
EVENINGCOOPER – Drunk driving
TIMMYTITTY – Tiny bones
ZAZAZ – Pedestrian annihilator
POWPOW – Opponent repulsificator

240 ⮑ 'change firing mode' and 'change ammunition' buttons in an accessible position on the keyboard helps with this

ENERGY WEAPONS PATHWAY

250 **The primary advantage of this route is the fact that none of its weapons require collectable ammunition to use. Instead, they're powered by the recharging centres. As long as you can run back to a recharger to top up your supply, you can fight with abandon. Try to locate one as**
260 **soon as you enter a level. However, the weapons are generally more specialist than those in the standard pathway. A devotee of these should consider at least dabbling in the others to gain versatility. Note that a higher maintenance skill leads to a greater maximum possible charge.**

270 APOLLO H4 LASER PISTOL

Minimum: Energy 1
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 1/2/1
Relatively weak, especially against annelids or spiders, its strength is in its relatively unlimited fuel source However, once it's been upgraded it becomes more potent, especially
280 in its alternate over-drive attack mode. Generally, though, this is best used in non-intense situations where you're trying to avoid expending more powerful weapons' ammunition.

LASER SABRE

Minimum: Energy 4, Agility 4
Repair/Modification/Maintenance
290 min: N/A
A deadly hand-to-hand weapon which can be put to good use for much of the game. It's the best reason for concentrating on this pathway early in your mission. If you concentrate many of your modules in this pathway, it's possible to be skilled enough to use it when you first encounter it in
300 the engine core. As with the wrench, evasive actions and ambush tactics will increase your fatality inducing powers.

EMP RIFLE

Minimum: Energy 6
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 2/3/6
A heavy weapon designed for a
310 single purpose: killing mechanical beings. Awkward as hell to maintain, it's the cheapest and most efficient way to wipe out the hi-tech foes. It fires quickly, and on overload mode has an area effect function. Its large projectile makes it particularly effective against the otherwise elusive Assassins. The fact that it does no damage
320 whatsoever against organics is a pretty serious one, though.

HEAVY WEAPONS PATHWAY

Big guns. Big bangs. It's all quite
330 **simple, isn't it?**

TC-11 GRENADE LAUNCHER

Minimum: Heavy 1
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 1/1/3
The promise of an area-effect, highly-destructive weapon should be enough to tempt almost any
340 martial character that the relatively small investment to gain Heavy skill 1 is worthwhile. The one drawback is that it possesses more ammunition types than any other weapon, taking up large expanses of your backpack. Equally, its ammunition is far rarer than standard weapon types, meaning you have to pick your shots. ECM
350 grenades are just about the best security droid killers there are.

STASIS FIELD GENERATOR

Minimum: Heavy 3, Strength 3
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 6/2/4
Bit of a weird one this. It doesn't hurt anyone at all, instead just freezing people to the spot,
360 allowing you to wipe them out at your leisure. The fact that it uses the quite rare (at least in the middle of the game when you first encounter it) prism ammunition doesn't help either. It has a relatively short range, so is best used by luring a foe close to a corner, then leaning round to apply the anti-anti-freeze.

370

FUSION CANNON

Minimum: Heavy 6, Strength 4
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 4/4/3
Freud would like this one. It's just an incredibly large cannon. While even set to 'Death' mode it doesn't do more damage than a burst of armour-piercing from a assault-rifle
380 against a bot, its advantage is that it's able to damage just about *anything*. With the Fusion you can reduce the time you spend switching between weapon or ammo types and just point and fire And an obvious word of warning: It's an area effect weapon. Don't use it when you're close enough to hug a foe

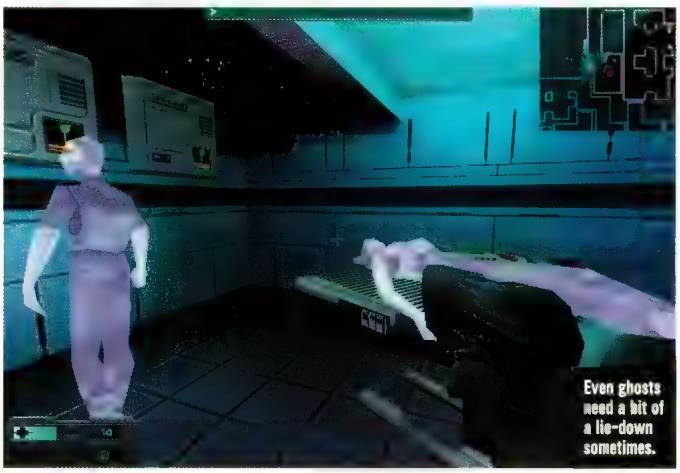
390

EXOTIC

These start appearing in the mid-to-end game, the product of mixing human and annelid technology together. You'll need a decent research skill and spend ages skulking around the ship to
400 **gather the requisite chemicals before you're able to utilise them.**

CRYSTAL SHARD

Minimum: Exotic 1, Research 4
The best melee weapon in the



Even ghosts need a bit of a lie-down sometimes.

game. If you're a specialised close-combatant (high strength, the deadly weapon and smasher OS upgrades), it's just about irresistibly attractive Tactics are the same as the wrench and the laser-sabre

VIRAL PROLIFERATOR

Minimum: Exotic 4, Research 5
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 4/3/4
A really unusual weapon which takes considerable effort to master – and it's questionable whether it's actually worth that perspiration. It has a short range, and the shell only detonates when you release the mouse-button It has a mild area effect, and can be selected to hurt either only annelids or humans. Think of it as a more spooky shotgun for maximum effects

ANNELID WORM LAUNCHER

Minimum: Exotic 6, Research 6, Strength 3, Agility 3
Repair/Modification/Maintenance min: 5/2/4
You won't get this until the end of the game: It's found in Captain Diego's cabin and is a homing rocket launcher. Which fires explosive worms as projectiles. Barking, I know. Like the viral proliferator, it can be set to hurt either annelid or human targets. If set to the latter, be doubly careful only to target foes at range.

PSIONIC SKILLS

There are thirty-five psionic skills, arranged into five separate tiers (groups). Which adds up to a frankly grotesque number of cyber modules required to purchase the lot; but, of course, you can't. The trick is choosing the correct abilities to compliment your chosen style. Even a hardcore OSA will probably want to dabble in other skill areas.

For example, a powerful combination is a Marine/OSA crossbreed. Rather than being limited to the single resource of a pure Marine or OSA, you're able to draw on both the ammunition and psi-hypo reservoirs to gain power. Equally, many powers can boost your skills in an area Something like psychogenic cyber affinity, which adds two to your cybernetic affinity, will be popular when presented with a particularly difficult lock Here's a guide to the powers that should have you drooling.

TIER 1:

PROJECTED CRYOKINESIS.

This blast of cold is the standard weapon for a starting OSA and makes a fine back-up weapon for a low-level combat specialist in an ammunition shortage. It'll also will make you immensely popular at parties when ice-cubes run short.

KINETIC REDIRECTION.

Simply drags otherwise unreachable far-off objects towards you, so adds to the amount you're able to salvage from a level. If you don't have it, try experimenting with grenades to create similar results. Due to the physics system, explosions will knock objects around

REMOTE ELECTRON TAMPERING.

If there's an alarm in action, this will reduce the time remaining until its over by a psi dependant amount. If you

motocross accident...
...attempting "The Superman" stunt...
multiple break right tibia.

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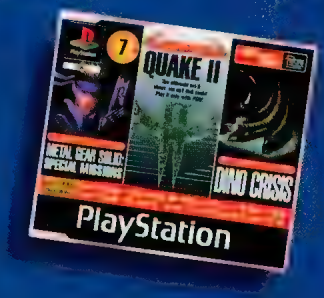

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520 · *really* can't reach a security panel, this is a good alternative

TIER 2:

CEREBRO STIMULATED REGENERATION

This one's worth the second tier's
530 price alone: even the hardest-core marine should fine this attractive Simply, it heals 2 points of health per psi. What makes it almost unique is that it adds them instantly. Normally, syringes or med-packs with restore your energy slowly, making them less useful in the middle of a firefight. However, with this power you can simply
540 select your psi-amp, use the power a few times, then skip back to your weapon

In many ways, this becomes even more powerful if it's one of your few psi-powers as you'll have less psi-points diverted into purposes other than keeping you breathing. If you plan not to take this power, be sure to select the
550 cyberassimilation OS upgrade and scavenge the circuitry from destroyed robots: it's the only other instant-healing item you'll come across in the game

ANTI-ENTROPIC FIELD

Handy for anyone whose maintenance and repair skills are undeveloped, as it stops weapons
560 degrading. The only problem is the general awkwardness of selecting the power from the list prior to a combat encounter

NEURAL RECONTAMINATION

There are several high radiation areas in the 'Body of the Many' level. By this point you'll probably
570 have lost your protective suit, making possessing this power, which reduces rad-absorption by 80%, extremely useful. And cheap

LOCALISED PYROKINESIS

Simply surrounds you with flame, causing low levels of damage to anyone or anything near you. Massively useful to dealing with
580 large swarms of annelid worms, it's also handy for illuminating the many darkened areas.

TIER 3

You've got to be quite seriously into psi to get this far. For a cross-class, this'll probably mean several
590 undeveloped skills in other areas. It's a hard life, mental warrior.

PSIONIC HYPNOGENESIS

Makes non-robots stand still until hurt, which makes it not quite as potent as a statis field generator. Hit them with this, then run away or get yourself into a tactically
600 stronger position.

ELECTRON CASCADE

A simple one, best used by those players who aim at complete self-sufficiency. Energy-based fighters may find this attractive due to it freeing them from searching out a recharge unit every time their batteries run flat.

610

PROJECT PYROKINESIS

Oh, it's a bloody fireball. It's a good zap-weapon. Especially useful for those enemies who don't seem to be hurt much by many things, such as the annelid spiders.

NEURAL TOXIN BLOCKER

620 Use *before* you go and try and walk past eggs or fight with spiders. BEFORE

TIER 4:

Oh, you're a hardcore OSA, aren't you? I can tell. No... don't look at me. But... I... am... your...
630 **servant. (drools)**

PHOTONIC REDIRECTION

Makes you invisible until you try to whack someone, thus just about perfect for traversing areas that literally no-one else could manage Comes into its own during the final battle against the Many. Who
640 doesn't it fool? Shodan

REMOTE CIRCUITRY MANIPULATION

For those high-level psychics who've just realised that they've forgot to buy the hacking skill and are about to try and crack Shodan's security. The main problem is that it takes from precious psi-points
650 rather than nanites, meaning that it's best not to use it too frequently Linked use with psi-implants and the recursive psionic amplification power makes this most potent

TIER 5:

Once you've reached this far,
670 **you're playing with power man was not meant to know.**

ADVANCED CEREBRO-STIMULATED REGENERATION

Like the level two power, but even more efficient.

INSTANTANEOUS QUANTUM RELOCATION

680 A teleport. Best placed in an area well away from the main conflict, preferably by a med-unit. Also interesting as it's my in-game justification for the monster respawning patterns.

That little guide should be enough
690 to ease your way into the sophisticated character-developing world of *System Shock 2*. Good luck, soldier. PCG

Next month: *Age Of Empires II, GTA 2*, and more *Hidden And Dangerous!*

FOUL PLAY

CONFLICT FREESPACE 2

Neatly coinciding with more concrete news on the sequel, here's a little reminder of how to cheat like a good 'un at this tricky space combat thingy. Remember, there's a full solution guide on the CD.

Activating the codes is a tricky business you've got to type '[illegible]', then hold the Shift [illegible] key while typing one of the codes below. Understandably, you won't be able to advance the mission if you use a cheat, as they're really just for your personal use.

C – Send message to enemies.
Shift C – Toggle availability of countermeasures for all ships.
G – Mark all primary goals complete.
Shift G – Mark all secondary goals complete.
Alt G – Mark all bonus goals complete.
I – Invincibility.
Shift I – Toggle invulnerability for target.
K – Kill target.
Shift K – Destroy targeted subsystem.
Alt K – 100% damage to yourself.
O – Toggle Descent-style physics.
R – Issue a mayday request for target.
Shift W – Infinite Weapons for all ships, including yours.
W – Infinite weapons for your ship.
9 – Scroll forward through all secondary weapons.
Shift 9 – Scroll backward through all secondary weapons.
0 – Scroll forward through all primary weapons.
Shift 0 – Scroll backward through all secondary weapons.

PLAYING GUIDE – PART 2

KINGPIN

The closer you get to the top the lower you've got to stoop. Prepare to belly-crawl, as Kingpin reaches its limb-strewn finale.

By MARK DONALD

FOUL PLAY

FLIGHT UNLIMITED 2

Couldn't find any cheats for this month's Game Of The Month, so here are some for its prequel. Well, you never know: they might work with *FU3*. It's worth a try.

To view a wire-frame border around the area you've got to fly through, hold Shift, Alt and A.

For a bonus aircraft, start a 'Quick Flight' and press 'M' three times while in-flight to return to the 'Quick Flight' screen. Click the 'Aircraft' button to reveal a new aircraft.

And finally, type 'suki' while in-flight to hear the Star Trek theme tune. Oh dear, if you prefer.

QUAKE III ARENA

I knew a girl called Rena once. Lovely, but incredibly nervous around exam time. I wonder what she's doing now, eh? I don't even think I have her number any more.

Anyway... to make these cheats work the server must enable them by using the devmap. For example, "devmap q3test1"). When the server-king has done this, just enter the codes in the console.

give all – Give all weapons and grappling hook
give health – Maximum health
give armor – Gives armour
give quad damage – A sparkling quad damage
give personal teleporter – Personal teleporter

1 EPISODE 4 RADIO CITY STATION

map name: rc1

You're in an underground station, so pop your heat away – there's no need for violence here. Ride the escalator to the top and have a chinwag with the two gentlemen you find. They're members of the local gang 'The Jokers'. They'll come in handy as muscle later on, but for now you have to pass their little initiation test.

Your victims are to the left of the escalator as you look down it. The Jokers will call 'Don't forget: No shooting!' when you head in the right direction. In any case, you'll know you went the wrong way if the next level loads.

Go down the stairs and look for a floor level grate on the third floor from the bottom. Go through it and wait for the train to whoosh by. When you exit the vent, ignore the ladder and balcony ahead of you and go left instead. Climb the ladder on the same side of the passage as the vent and enter the tunnel. Batter the goons,– but remember you can only use the crowbar. If you use dishonourable guns then you'll fail.

Exit the area by entering the pipe running along the wall at the bottom of the level. Toddle along the pipe, go back through the grate (mind the train), and scale the ladder to the right. Deal with the rats and jump to the pipes on the other side of the tunnel, hopefully avoiding the train along the way. Smash your way through the grate and into the water. Climb the ladder and wriggle through another vent to emerge near the start of the level. Turn left and tell the two 'jokers' to follow you to the previous vent. Head

(Above) Mr Big holding hands with his good lady after a long day perpetrating extreme violence.

(Right) Beware the one-armed bandit. He'll bleed on you.

through the door and 'hey presto' – welcome to the next map!

ENTER THE DRAGONS

map name: rc2

60 Walk onto the street and you'll meet a geezer and his lady friends. The only language they understand is violence. Once you've dealt with them, cross to the other side of the city while keeping right. When you find the three fire escapes (you should see them on your right), climb the first one and then walk
70 across the clothes line to get the health. Jump across to the furthest fire escape by the two walls. Climb onto the fire escape rail and leap to the roof. Move down a bit and walk along the balcony until you see a grey level on the wall to your left by the raised drawbridge. The switch opens the overhead door across the street. Now you need to
80 lower the bridge

Return to the part of the fire escape where you climbed onto the roof. Now, imagine you're going 'up' the ladder. Turn around, look to your right and jump across. Move along the catwalks, opening fire on everyone you meet. Eventually you'll find the drawbridge and the door you opened earlier . Lower
90 the bridge and go through the overhead door. Hit the switch on the wall at the end of the bridge. Now jump back down to the street to find the overhead door you've just unlocked

STREETS OF FIRE

map name: rc3

100 Press the switch to open the overhead door, and let carnage commence. Drill everyone in sight and watch out for the sniper on the balcony to the far-right. Amble to the end of the street where a couple of villains and a rocketeer wil present themselves. Now go through the small door where one of the sisters will be gassing on
110 about weapons hidden nearby, and they're right behind her, in a room under the stairs

Next, you must head up the stairs to the roof. Head for the billboard and climb on top via the ladder. Walk along the top of the sign and make a leap to the right onto the higher section of roof ahead. Take a running jump through
120 the gap in the railing and aim for the balcony across the street

Once on the balcony go left Balcony hop until you reach the water tower. Jump on to the water tower's platform and jump down to the other side where a lady stands between you and a switch. Shoot her. Now hit the switch. Cross the bridge then turn left. Enter the
130 overhead door and repel the grenade-happy harlot on the other side. At the end of the bridge you can take a lift to the next level. You just need to throw the switch.

SKYTRAM STATION

(map name: rc4)

Go into the bus station and take a
140 right to grab some health and ammunition from the back of a truck. Brace yourself for a scrap as you 'move out of the bus station and pick up some dosh from the big dustbin on the way. Head into the Chinatown-style area and climb the first set of stairs you see. When you see the room marked 'Keep Out' – obviously this means 'Go In'!
150 There, you'll scoop an attractive selection of gear. The door is

"Hello. I think it's about time I got a cleaner."

FOUL PLAY

STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

Has anyone spotted the uncanny similarity between this and *Masters Of Orion 2*? Hmm? Oh well, maybe it's just me.

To activate the cheats, you need an additional parameter in the command line of the shortcut: '-Mudd'. So, for example, C:\BOTF\Trek.exe -Mudd if the game's in that directory. Then, in the game, you've got these codes to make your empire-conquering that bit easier.

F9 – Adds 100% to Overall Research
F10 – Gives 10,000 Credits
F11 – Reveal Map on/off

STREET WARS

Also known as *Mob Rule* in America. I'm sure this says something about our different societies, such as the glamourisation of organised crime in the States versus our love of running battles in the streets; but it could be my imagination.

To access the cheat, start a game and, while selecting which team colour to play, type one of the codes and hit return. If you typed it correctly you'll hear a beep. Rinse and repeat as necessary. Within the game, you can toggle the cheat modes which you have selected on and off by pressing C.

speed364 – Allows speed up game in network mode
worker928 – Allow buying of workers at any time
pickup036 – Allow picking up of enemy beacons
weapons563 – Allow buying of any weapon for gangster
tenants872 – Allow selection of any tenant at any time
loans458 – Allow borrowing of any amount with bank
estates216 – Allow buying of an estate without conditions

FOUL PLAY

RE-VOLT

This game was the spark for much awful guessing in Cables, our office and, no doubt, right across the country. It really is the current craze.

Ahem. First off, you can customise your car in any way you want. Go to the 'cars' folder, then into one of the driveable cars' folders. Open the 'parameters' text file and change any values you like, such as 'Topspeed', 'Acceleration', and so on. Secondly, you can use the cheats below by entering them on the name wheel. Once you've entered one, you can put your own name back in and the cheat will still work.

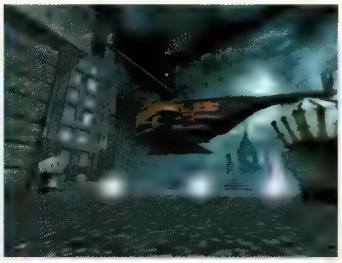
carnival – All Cars
sadist – Select Weapons in Game with Right Shift
tracker – All Tracks
changeling – Change Car During Mid-Race
makeitgood – Activated in-Game Options
tvtime – Enables F3 and F6 Cameras
drinkme – Small Cars
urco – UFO Selectable

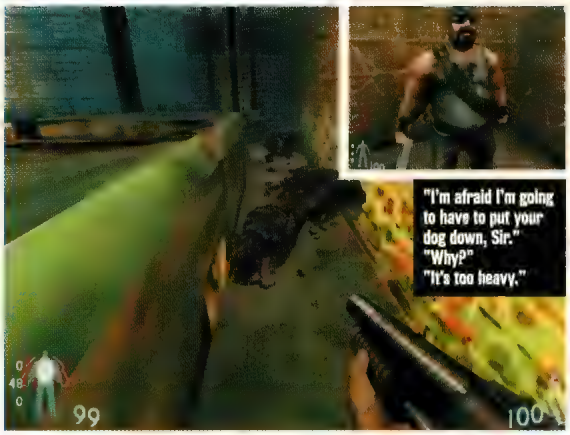
DRAKAN

What a shame. It had all the right ingredients: heavy adventures, gigantic dragons, balls of fire... but not much in the way of game. Still... you can always cheat, right?

For unlimited potions or crystals, drop one out of your inventory but don't drop it. Go back into 'action' mode, then back to your inventory and you'll have a copy of whatever you took out. Repeat as necessary. Also, press 'I' to risk...Ouch

iamgod – God mode
sanctuary – God mode
smeghead – full health





locked, but weak. Aim a few shotgun blasts at the crack and you're through

Go up some more stairs and walk along for a while. Eventually, you'll see a small door on your right. Go through it, around the corner, and enter the infamous
160 Typhoon Bar (map bar_rc).

You can only hire thugs in the Typhoon bar if you passed the initiation with the 'Joker' gang earlier Regardless, you should buy a SkyTram ticket from the scalper for $50, by going through the door on the right hand side.

Whatever happens don't pick up the phone. Oh alright then, but
170 save the game first. Leave the bar via the basement (you can hire another joker here too), then go down the street where you'll find an alley with the steel gate and lighted panel. You can stroll straight through, assuming you've got a SkyTram ticket.

Go to the other side of the area, past the SkyTram, then jump on to the railing, then the ledge, and
180 down the pipe below.

CENTRAL TOWERS

(map name: rc5)

Travel along the sewer to the ladder on the far left. Now clamber on to the ledge, turn right and go through an overhead door to stock up on all the essentials. All roads lead in front
190 of the Central Towers. They also lead to goonsville. Destroy everyone in your path. Enter the building and march through the door directly ahead. Now brace yourself for the first End Boss

CENTRAL TOWERS EAST

(map name: rcboss1)

200 The rooms in the hallway are full of guns, armour, ammo and health Plus one ruffian. Press either lift button and the right-hand car will arrive – the left-hand car takes you to the final level. Fill the surprise in the lift with lead!

When the door opens come out fighting. Boss One will be
210 waiting for you. 10 rocket hits should do it. With the boss dead, you're free to ride the left-hand lift to the next level.

CENTRAL TOWERS WEST

(map name: rcboss2)

Move directly ahead and grease the
220 dog – if you know what I mean Turn left and get supplies. Now return and go right. You'll be allowed to enjoy a short in-game cut-scene and then you begin trouncing the final Boss, er Bosses Unfortunately, the female of the species is deadlier than the male, so concentrate your fire on Mr Boss.

With the big enchilada brown
230 bread, Queenpin will nick off in a helicopter and you're the Daddy! (cutscene map name kpcut7).

Kingpin got a full-bodied **90%** review and a coveted Game Of Distinction award in **PCG 73.** You can read the review and find the first part of this walkthrough (which appeared in **PCG 74)** on **CD Gamer 1.**

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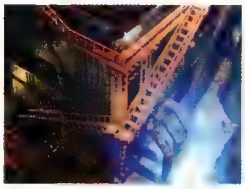
PCGAMER The writing on the wall Stop here for those specialist items you're looking for

Q&A

Welcome to Q&A, a little haven of peace amidst the crazy PC GAMER experience.

By ROSS ATHERTON

Ah, room service. Could you take these goblins away, please?



It's a proper RPG tips-shop this month. Hence the big swords.

FINAL FANTASY VII

Q Help! I've been stuck on *Final Fantasy VII* for six months now and can't figure out where to go. I've just brought down the Sector 7 plate and can only go to the Wall Market, Sector 6 slums, the Church and the Main Gate.

Michael Bennison, e-mail

A It's been a little while since I played this, but I think I can help Go to the Wall Market and get some zinc batteries There is a rope near Don Corneo's Mansion; climb it and, when you get stuck, stick a battery in the nearby yellow box That should see you on your way to the Shinra HQ

BALDUR'S GATE

Q I need help defeating two creatures in *Baldur's Gate*. I have reached the maze beneath the Thieves' Guild, and I can't kill the two skeleton warriors. They seem resistant to magic, and slaughter my party in seconds. I tried a 'Protection From Undead' scroll but it has no effect!

Richard Geddie, e-mail

A The good news is that there's a way to defeat these (and many other) tough opponents. The bad news is that it's not foolproof, and you really do need two fighters capable of standing up to such beasts – at least for a while – in the final battle.

The cunning plan is this: equip a magic-using type with a Wand of Monster Summoning. You can buy these, and, although they're expensive, they are often invaluable. Cast the spel at the creatures, and fire destructive spells and arrows at them while they are surrounded by summoned monsters. Working out which spells and arrows they are vulnerable to is a matter of trial and error.

Q In *Baldur's Gate*, I just can't find the bandits' hideout. I have completely swept Larswood, Peldvale and the area with the four mages in, but I can't find anything. My journal says something about trying a different approach, but I have no idea what that means.

Graham Fraser, Berkhamsted

A If my memory serves me right, you need to go to the tavern in the south-west corner of Beregost, go upstairs and have a little chat with the chap in the westernmost room With some gentle 'persuasion', he'll tell you that the bandit camp is to the north of the Peldvale area (but you can't get there without him telling you about it). Then kill him for the experience points. Cruel world, eh?

SILVER

Q I was hoping you would be able to share your gaming godliness by helping me in *Silver*. I have the four first orbs and have Reuben and Cagen on my team. However, I can't find the gold, bronze and stone keys. Please can you tell me where they are?

Daniel Parsons, Reading

A Head back to the Fire Tree, go left and defeat the boss there He'll provide the bronze key and a lightning staff. The gold key can be found in Thaddeus' Tower. Make sure Rain is unflooded, then go through a hole in the upper right corner of one of the wall screens.

Get past Khan, take the stairway up and defeat the invisible imp (take his ring). Go back to the large door; go through it to find Jeremiah. He will drop the gold key. The stone key is in Deathgate. After meeting the ghost of professor O'Leary, take the path below the wooden bridge and you'll meet Canitos – he'll give you the stone key.

OVER TO YOU...

This month, I've been down at 3dfx's headquarters, hassling the powers that be. See, the Voodoo 3 2000 is all very well, but as of this month we're giving away the more muscular Voodoo 3 3000 instead. It's amazing what a few thinly-veiled threats can achieve, eh? This month, lucky Chris Childs wins one for his *TRII* help.

A This is in answer to James Orum's *Tomb Raider II* problem (PCG 73). The two wooden grates are pressure pads; once you've run over the second you have to quickly jump through the door which opens. You're still on a timer, so jump over the spikes (angle to the right) and through the next door; then climb down the ladder and through the corridor.

Chris Childs, Stoke On Trent

A In reply to D Gunner's question about *Outcast* (PCG 74): put the Eluee (water) talisman in the Ka (air) temple, the Ka talisman in the Ghanda (earth) temple, and the Fae (fire) talisman in the Eluee temple. Cross the water to the Fae temple clear out the guards (make sure you've got Maar to stop the Riss production first), and put the Eluee talisman in the slot next to the stairs. You should then be able to access the mon safely.

Philip Braithwaite, Stockton-on-Tees

READERS' TOP TIPS

Hello there. Think you're a bit smart with the old PC games, then? This month, James Burgess is the cleverest contributor; he'll shortly be receiving a random nugget of game-related stuff. Send in your tips, Easter Eggs and cunning moves to Q&A at the usual postal address, or QandA@futurenet.co.uk – and remember to include a return postal address.

TOMB RAIDER 3

Feeling the pinch of the cold water in the Antarctica levels? You can extend Lara's exposure time underwater by saving your game when the bar is nearly full; then reload and the exposure bar will be empty! Most useful for retrieving ammo and so on from the icy depths

James Burgess, London

JEDI KNIGHT

This is a great tip for fans of *Sam & Max* who also own *Jedi Knight*. On the fifth level of *JK*, follow the canal into the city. Go past the first few buildings, and follow the woman who walks over the bridge towards you. She goes through a locked door; scuttle inside and you'll come face to face with... Max! If you activate him indoors, he'll run outside. If you activate him outside, you'll see in Max-o-vision!

Kevin Cosgrove, Monkton

GTA

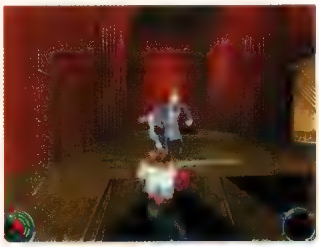
Don't the super-bikes in *GTA* really annoy you? They're too fast, and you end up as roadkill if you hit anything. Here's my tip: hold down Ctrl when riding, and when you get knocked off you just keep on walking. A word of warning, though: don't have the flamethrower or rocket launcher equipped at the time!

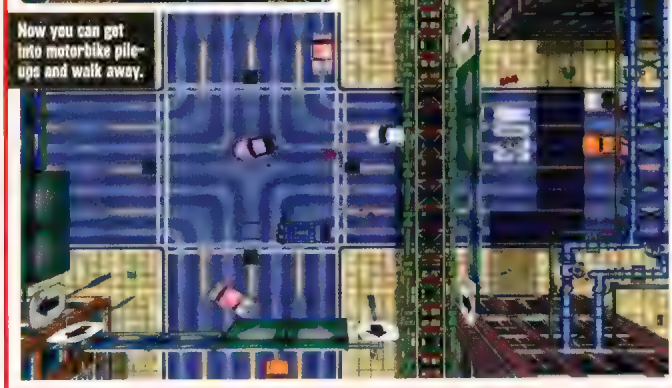
Tommy Czaczkes, e-mail

C&C: TIBERIAN SUN

If you've got a big monitor and want a higher resolution in *Tiberian Sun*, you can change it above 800 x 600. In Windows, open the 'Sun.ini' file with Notepad, and change the values for horizontal and vertical resolutions to higher values, e.g. 1024 x 768

Richard Stevens, Nuneaton





Now you can get into motorbike pile-ups and walk away.

Cutter, readying his transporter, is foxed by a lack of doors.

Annoyed by those sneaky subterranean APC attacks in *C&C: Tiberian Sun?* Build a mobile sensor array and, once you detect the hidden vehicle, select some of your units and order them to 'escort' it. They will follow the vehicle wherever it goes on the battlefield and then attack it when it eventually pops up; which means you needn't waste time waiting for it to attack

Christopher Brooke, Halifax

OUTCAST

If you've ever wanted to get through a locked door in *Outcast*, here's how to do it without needing a pesky key. Stand as close as you can to the door and drop the F-Link teleporter. Activate the teleporter, and you should appear on the other side of the door. It's as simple as that

Alex Dresner, Berkshire

CUSTOMER HELP-LINES

Most publishers offer their own games support service, so if you're stuck on one of their titles, try phoning them directly.

Acclaim	0171 344 5000
Activision	01895 456789
Blue Byte	01604 259090
Codemasters	01926 816044
Eidos	0121 356 0831
Electronic Arts	01753 546465
Empire	0181 343 9143
Gremlin	0114 279 9020
GT Interactive	0171 565 7303
Hasbro/MicroProse	0800 328 7007
Infogrames	0161 827 8060
Interactive Magic	01344 409399
Microsoft	0870 501 0100
Novalogic	01753 546465
Psygnosis	0151 282 3333
Rage	0121 456 3123
SCI	0171 228 3543
Sierra	0118 920 9100
Take 2	01429 855046
TLC/Mindscape	0870 741 6821
Ubi Soft	0181 944 9000
Virgin/Interplay	0171 368 2255

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Write to: Over To You, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Or e-mail: QandA@futurenet.co.uk

A In response to Chris Hacker's *X-Wing Alliance* query (PCG 74), the Kalidor Crescent comes in various forms for doing things 'beyond the call of duty'. You can get the special Diamond Eyes version by inspecting and then destroying every ship in a few specific missions, and it can be awarded for other things too. It's not linked to a specific mission.

Matthew Fellows, Aldershot

Q I recently bought *The Last Train*. However, after an hour or so I have become stuck. I've talked to Kronos about completing the transaction and I don't know what to do next.

John Stevens, e-mail

Q In *Populous: The Beginning* I saw a spell in a menu called 'Ghost Army'. What is it, and how do I get it?

Nick Wong, e-mail

Q I'm a bit confused about *Discworld Noir*. I've finished the game, but I haven't used the third disc yet! Can it be played in a different way? Have I missed out on loads of the game?

Cathy French, Kent

Q I'm a bit stuck on *Gangsters*. When I find the HQ of another gang, how do I kill the leader? Bombing and torching doesn't seem to work.

Richard Hartnell, e-mail

PC GAMER

The Holy Grail. The Everest of the upgrade world.
Are you ready to face... upgrading your system board?

SYSTEMS

BEARDY BIT

Motherboards needn't be the nightmarish things many people hold them to be. Provided you have a standard board to start with, fitting a new one is actually fairly straightforward, but do bear in mind that some of the larger companies use non-standard boards which will give you headaches. The bottom line is: if you're unsure, seek professional help.

SIMON WILLIAMS

OK, I've chickened out of this one long enough. You can fiddle around with upgrades, extra memory and faster graphics cards, but in the end you'll need to make the Big Upgrade – you'll need to change the system board. The good news is, it's not nearly as frightening at it sounds, and fitting a new board gives you the latest BIOS, drive controllers, AGP slot and the highest clock rate support. You'll need a cross-head screwdriver, a pair of long-nose pliers, some sticky labels, and a rubber band to tie your beard out of the way.

The design of a PC is physically divided into two parts; the system board – which sits in the bottom of the case (on one side in a tower case), and the bits that plug into it. These bits include the processor, memory, cables to all the drives and expansion cards, including your graphics adapter

The most major upgrade you can do to a PC involves changing the system board itself. At a stroke this gives you a brand new chipset – the pair of chips which control all your drives and co-ordinate how the processor interacts with just about everything else in your PC. The system board provides serial, parallel and USB sockets, keyboard, mouse controllers, and often sound and graphics too – (though I'd recommend avoiding boards with built-in graphics)

Bringing all these things up to date, as well as providing the latest arrangement of expansion slot support for the fastest new processors, and the latest BIOS can be a pretty radical change for any PC. There are also so many parts to a system board, that there's considerable potential for things to go wrong, too. You therefore need to be convinced this change is both necessary, and within your capabilities Read on to find out what's involved, and make an informed decision

First, the all-important disclaimer. While I'll do my best to explain everything as simply as possible, every PC is different Neither PC GAMER nor I can be responsible for any tangles you get into upgrading your own machine You probably fall into one of three groups of competence with PC hardware. Pick your group, and tread carefully.

1. You have upgraded a system board before. You may only find bits of this article new to you, but there may also be hints and tips which prove useful.

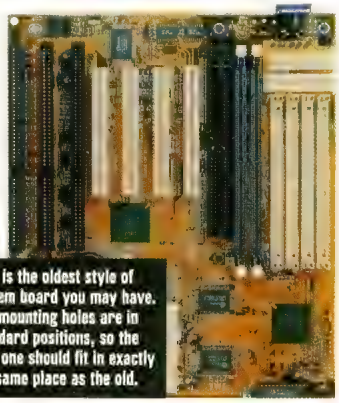
2. You've never been inside your PC and after reading the following, feel it still looks like a short-term lease for a flat in a Dockland's warehouse conversion. If this is you – DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING Take your PC to a competent dealer and ask them nicely to make it better for you

3. You have opened your PC before and added expansion cards, perhaps replaced a graphics card or added more memory. You've managed to get your PC going again after this, without any help. By the sounds of things you're probably perfectly capable of upgrading your PC by changing its system board

Secondly, you need to identify which type of system board you have. There are three common types of system board used in PCs: Baby AT, ATX, and Micro ATX. If you're not going to change the case of your PC, you're going to have to use the same type of board to upgrade it as is already fitted. Identification is fairly easy

BABY AT

This board has a single round socket at the left hand end looking from the back of the board. This is for the old-



This is the oldest style of system board you may have. The mounting holes are in standard positions, so the new one should fit in exactly the same place as the old.

DOWN BELOW Hot new widgets to stick under the bonnet

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRES

I recently got rather over-excited by a set of Sirocco speakers from Videologic, which, has now changed its name to the really snappy Imagination Technologies (though its Web address is still www.videologic.co.uk).

Think of the Crossfires as not just speakers for your PC, but as an extension to your hi-fi and home cinema systems. I think you'll agree, the price seems more than reasonable.

Although they cost £200, it's money well spent since the sound quality is superb and they're fine for hi-fi reproduction, too. They're not ideal for home cinema or environmental games however, since there are only two satellites.

Imagination Technologies has just launched the 'Sirocco Crossfires', a second take on the Sirocco design with four satellites rather than two and improved input facilities at back and front of the amplifier. The satellites are provided by Audax and are slightly smaller than the original Sirocco devices but give similar sound quality. The same enormous sub-woofer is used as on the original three-piece Siroccos.

You now have a set of four phono sockets at the rear of the amp for connection of a dual sound source, such as from a SoundBlaster Live!, or Imagination Technology's own Sonic Vortex 2 card. There's a second stereo input and a 3.5mm jack socket at the front for quick connection of a MiniDisc player or another portable

Gateway Performance 450

■ Supplier **Gateway** ■ Contact **0800 142000** ■ Price **£939 (inc VAT)** ■ Processor **Pentium III 450** ■ Secondary cache **512K** ■ Memory **64Mb (768Mb max)** ■ Hard drive **6.36Gb, IBM** ■ CD-ROM **6-speed DVD Panasonic** ■ Graphics card **16Mb ATI Rage 128** ■ Monitor **17-inch Gateway** ■ Other bits **Floppy, 56K modem, Ensoniq Vibra 16 sound card, Epson Stylus 440 printer** ■ Bundled software **Windows 98, Microsoft Works Suite 99, DVD, sound and modem utilities.**

GATEWAY is well known for building great PCs, with plenty of room where it counts: memory, hard drive, screen size etc. This is one of the company's budget systems, though, and some of the normal care and attention seems to be missing.

The specification starts well enough, with a 6-speed Panasonic DVD drive, which for some reason, Gateway has assigned with the letter V – which may cause problems with some software installations. Below this is a standard floppy drive and inside is a 6.36Gb hard drive, providing a fair amount of room

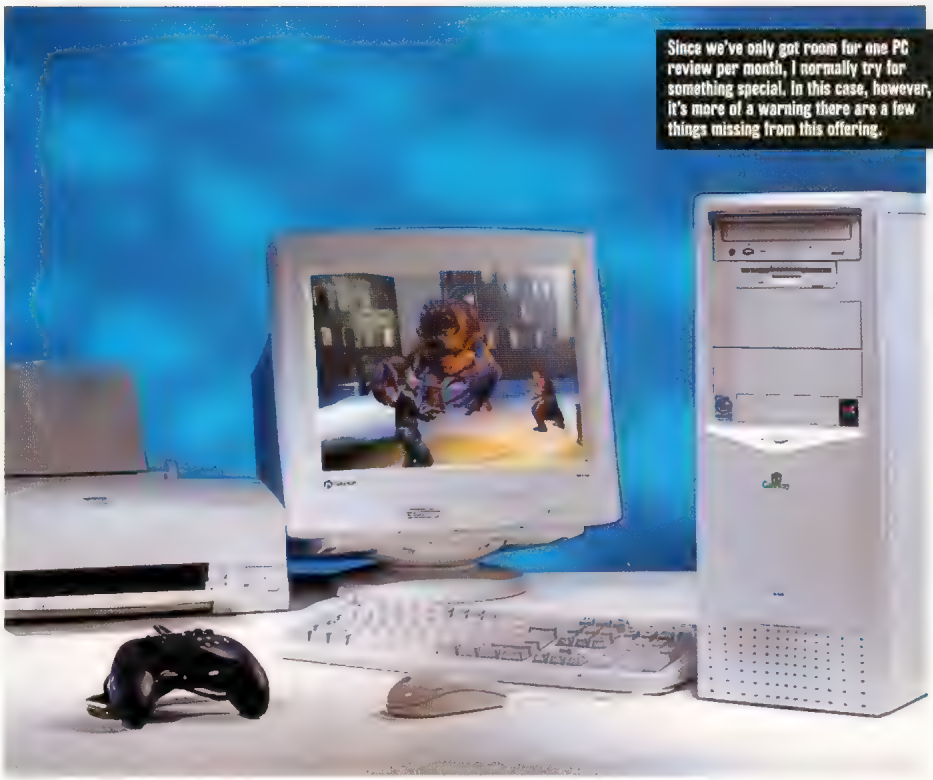
The processor is a Pentium III 450, which is coupled to 64Mb of memory. Both of these are adequate, without being anything special. A 56K modem takes up the first occupied expansion slot

Sound is a bit of a cheapskate affair. The sound card is an Ensoniq unit, using a Creative Vibra 16 chip, so no fancy environmental effects here. At least, I suppose, there is a sound card: incredibly, there aren't any speakers! This is fairly amazing in a PC built for the home market at the end of 1999.

The Epson printer is a fairly fair example of the breed, and gives good results on plain and coated papers. However, I would happily sacrifice it for a set of Altec Lansing or Boston Acoustics speakers – both of which Gateway sell.

Graphics output comes from an ATI Rage 128 card, not quite last year's technology, but certainly the beginning of this year's. It does the job, but doesn't have anything left over for next year's games (3DMark of 2242 at 1024 x 768 x 16-bit) Gateway supplies a 17-inch monitor which gives a good picture, but appears to have a weak power supply. When you call up any window with a good area of white, the screen display changes size.

Overall, I can't help feeling that Gateway has rather missed the point on this one. Shame, really



Since we've only got room for one PC review per month, I normally try for something special. In this case, however, it's more of a warning there are a few things missing from this offering.

PC GAMER

Well-meaning but ultimately lacking mid-budget system.

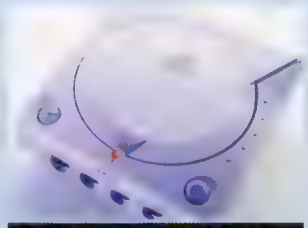
65%

of your PC.

sound source, such as MP3 player, CD player or dictaphone.

Controls on the front of the Crossfire amp are now more conventional, with volume, sub (for sub woofer), fade (for panning front to back) and source selection.

The sound is superb, with fine detail in the treble and middle frequencies and a good, but not overstated bass thump. They work very well at high volumes, too. A set of Crossfires will set you back a hefty £230 – but you get what you pay for.



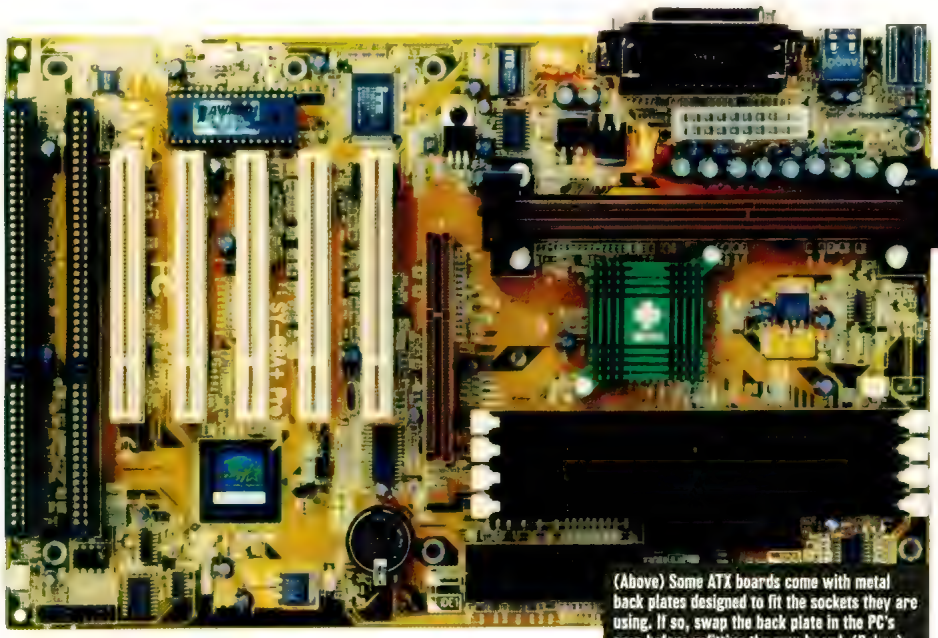
Sega's Dreamcast runs the WindowsCE operating system on a non-Intel processor. X-Box would use a 500MHz processor and nVIDIA's GeForce 256.

GATESTATION

So, Microsoft is designing a PC-based games console. Details are a little sketchy at the moment but we gather it's tentatively called 'X-box' (Spooky?). It will run WindowsCE, like Sega's Dreamcast, on an Intel processor and with nVIDIA's new GeForce 256 graphics processor. It will have DVD and modem capabilities and cost under £150.

That last snippet is the most interesting, since if Microsoft really can produce a PC games console and sell it for under £150, it will undercut Dreamcast, Playstation 2 and Nintendo's new console, before we've even started comparing specifications.

Microsoft are capable of doing this since as it can make use of all the economies of scale available from the millions of new PCs made each year. X-box is apparently not due until the end of next year, but games developers have already been briefed in secret at this year's ECTS – the autumn trade show for the games industry which the chaps told you about last issue.



(Above) Some ATX boards come with metal back plates designed to fit the sockets they are using. If so, swap the back plate in the PC's case before refitting the new board. (Below) Micro ATX boards are quite recent and very small. Check your new board isn't bigger than your old one, or it might not fit your case.

style keyboard connector and is known as a DIN socket. The board itself could be rectangular or square in overall shape, with the long edge of the board running from front to back (the 'back' meaning the edge nearest the back of the PC itself). All the serial, parallel and other sockets will connect to the board by short cables

ATX

This board is rectangular, with the long side of the rectangle running from side to side, instead of front to back. The extra width that this provides is taken up almost entirely by sockets, which are mounted directly on the board. These will include serial and parallel ports, and probably sound and joystick sockets as well.

MICRO ATX

This board is like a smaller version of the ATX, in that it has a series of sockets mounted along its back edge. However, since it's smaller, it has fewer expansion slots. Instead of the seven or so slots on Baby AT and ATX boards, the Micro ATX is likely to have a couple of PCI slots and one or two ISA ones as well

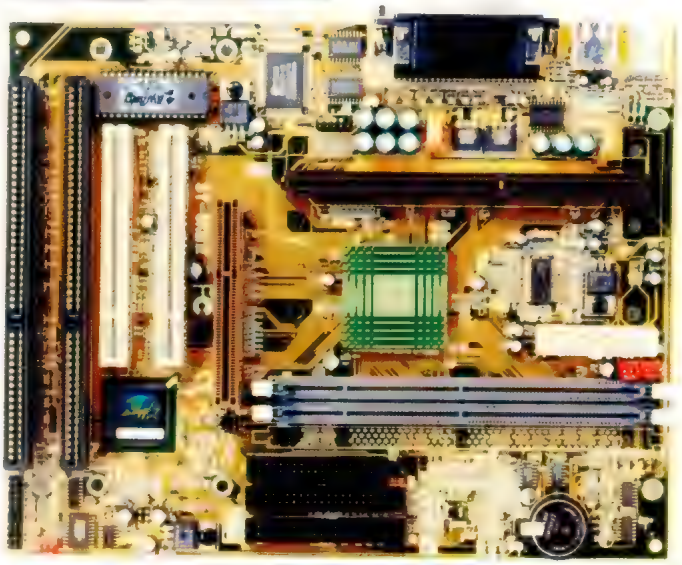
OTHERS

If you have a PC from one of the big retail companies, like Compaq, Hewlett Packard, Packard Bell and some others, you may have a machine with a different design altogether. The system board may be very small and have a single board rising off it, on which the expansion cards are mounted so that they effectively sit in a stack above the system board. With this kind of configuration, you're unlikely to be able to upgrade the system board. I'm afraid you should think of some other solution if you're looking for better performance, or replacement.

FIRST, TAKE YOUR SCALPEL...

To replace the system board, you have to take apart a good proportion of the electronics of your PC, so don't skimp on any of the steps.

1. Switch the PC off at the wall, but keep it plugged in. This keeps the earth lead working, so you can't have any static problems until your unplug the power



DOWN BELOW

WEB SITES

Most people now have Internet connections, but rather than just using them for games or porny pictures, there's a lot of useful information. You can, for example, go to the Railtrack site (www.railtrack.co.uk), which keeps a complete set of up-to-date train timetables on-line. Type in the details of your planned journey and this site will show you the trains. There's also a similar site for National coaches at www.nationalexpress.co.uk

You probably already know about yell.co.uk, the on-line yellow pages, but BT also maintains an on-line directory enquiry service at www.bt.com/phonenetuk/. Most importantly, unlike the voice service, there's no charge for making enquiries on the Internet.

Type in your start and destination stations and date and time of travel – Railtrack's timetable web site will come up with all the details you need.

FOUND AND LOST

Last month I described a utility from PowerQuest called Lost and Found. At that time I hadn't got it working properly, but now I have – I think! My next problem was that the test floppy disk I used could not be read by the disk recovery program. This is a pretty major shortcoming in a program designed to extract data from damaged disks.

I have still failed to get it to read this particular floppy, which has multiple missing address marks, but it has read others with deleted files and other nasties, so I'm moderately pleased with the product overall. It costs around £30 and you should be able to pick up a copy from most computer software dealers.

connector from the system board.
2. Unplug all the cables from the back of the PC – monitor, modem, speakers etc. Remove the case lid.
3. Unscrew the single screws from the back end of all your expansion cards and remove the cards. Note which sockets they came from and try and keep them in the same order. You can leave any blank plates on the back panel screwed in
4. Ease the ribbon cables gently out from each of the drive controllers on the system board
5. Disconnect any small ribbon cables that run from sockets on the back panel to plugs on the system board.
6. Disconnect the small black plugs with the coloured, twisted wires that come from your PC's front panel. Using your current system board's manual, label each of these plugs by folding a sticky label around the wire
7. Disconnect the single or twin white plugs which have leads running from the power supply. If there are two plugs, pull them up and tilt them backwards before lifting them off. With a single, large plug, there will be a clip on one side which needs to be held tightly to release the plug from the socket. You might need to disconnect the lead from the processor's fan as well
8. Unscrew all the screws which pass through the system board to hold it to the chassis of your PC. You may find some of the holes have small, white nylon clips holding them in. You can release these by pinching their tops with the long-nosed pliers
9. Ease the system board out of the case and place it on a non-static surface e.g. not a piece of polystyrene packaging! If you're going to reuse your DIMM or SIMM modules, release the clips at either end of the memory sockets to remove them. If you're going to reuse the processor, you have to release the clips on the processor's heatsink first to remove it. Release whatever clips are used to retain the processor and remove that too.

Now you have to fit the processor, heatsink and memory to your new system board before running through the above process in reverse order. To fit the board back into your PC's case, check the system board manual to match any jumpers to the type, speed and core voltage of the processor you're fitting to the new board. Most manuals now show the setting for specific processors, rather than giving you generic settings, which makes things a lot easier.

FITTING TIPS

- If you have a screwdriver with a magnetic tip, you'll find this invaluable for picking up the screws you drop inside the case – and believe me, you will drop them. If you don't have one, an impressive substitute can be made from a regular screwdriver with a blob of Blu-Tac stuck on the end
- Check the alignment of power connectors before you switch on. Both the old AT and new ATX style connectors can be connected the wrong way round, if forced, and can irrevocably damage your system board. With the twin AT connectors, fit them so that the black cables on each sit together when plugged in
- Be sure to check the orientation of ribbon connectors to floppy, CD and hard, drives. The red stripe is placed on line 1 of a cable. A figure '1' is normally marked on the surface of the system board. At the drive end, pin 1 is usually at the end closest to the power connector. This unwritten law applies to nearly all drives.
- Fit the memory, processor, heatsink and fan, *before* fitting the new system board into the case – it's much less fiddly. You may also find it helpful to fit the power connector (and cables for serial and parallel ports on non-ATX boards) onto their headers on the system board as well.

FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM

Upgrading a system board can turn an also-ran PC into a smooth mover. If you're methodical, it's not difficult and shouldn't take above an hour from start to finish. Getting the whole thing going properly may take a while longer, but you should be able to sort everything out in a week-end. PCG

HELP!

ABORT, RETRY, FAIL...

PC going bump in the night? Write to pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

Q:> I have a PII 350, 128Mb, Intel i740, Voodoo 2 and 6.4Gb hard drive with 64Mb of memory. When I play a game, every 10 minutes or so the display freezes for about 5-10 seconds, while the hard drive is accessed. This is quite annoying, since the action seems to continue while the screen's frozen. I took the PC back to the shop and the owner told me I needed more RAM. I now have 128Mb – but the problem is still there.

Chris Allen, e-mail

A:> *I can see why your dealer might have thought it was lack of memory but few games need more than 64Mb – yet! It could be something in Windows happening in the background while you play. If your games are running under DirectX, there may be an autosave from another application interrupting your gaming. Try disabling all other activities before playing, including those in the utilities tray on the desktop*

Q:> I'm moving to Canada within a year and would like to take the games I've bought in the UK and, of course, my lovely Siemens Nixdorf computer/monitor with me.
1. Will I have a problem with the different voltage/frequency?
2. Will I still be able to get your brilliant magazine?

Lee Thompson, e-mail

A:> *Check the power supply on your Siemens Nixdorf. If it has switches marked 230/110 on the back of system unit and monitor, you should be able to flick these to*

draw power at 110V from a Canadian socket. Check the manual too, as the power supply may auto-sense the input voltage. I don't know where in Canada you're going, but I did see a copy of the UK PC GAMER in a branch of Whittaker's bookshop in Ottawa this year. Alternatively, you can just take out an overseas subscription. Check our subs pages (p. 178).

Q:> I have a problem with my 56Kb/s modem, which runs, at best at 36Kb/s. I've got a 400MHz Pentium II, with plenty of everything, including 128Mb of memory. I read somewhere that you should expect 56Kb/s modems to run at least 40Kb/s, any lower and there's a problem

I know there is, 'cos I went to my friend's house – who's computer is useless compared to mine – he downloaded the same demo from the same site, at the same time of day as me at 5K/s, whereas I downloaded it at 3.5K/s Is there something I can do?

Nick Blackbourn, Heywards Heath

A:> *Sounds like your friend's computer isn't that useless, which must annoy you! V90 modems are sensitive to line noise, so it could be your friend has a better telephone connection. You could try ringing BT and asking them to check the gain level on your Internet signal – a higher gain could cure the problem entirely.*

Q:> I would be eternally grateful if you'd help me out here. I've recently bought the elderly *Grand Prix 2*, which requires 20 files and buffers to work. When it ran the detection system for my PC though, I had 40 files but 12 buffers! It suggests I change the buffers and files lines in config.sys. I've looked at config.sys in the Windows directory and tried to change the lines, but nothing has changed.

Charles Dawson, e-mail

A:> *You need to edit the config.sys file in the C:\ directory – nowhere else. If there isn't one there, create one in Notepad and save it. If there is one, use Notepad to edit exiting lines or add new ones which read: files=40 buffers=20.*

Windows will obey these lines before starting up, which should sort your problem. Have fun with GP2!

THE MONEY

Your disposable income disposed of.

SIDEWINDER DUAL STRIKE (USB)

MICROSOFT

0870 6010100 www.microsoft.com/uk/games

£50

CLEARLY, Microsoft's most twisted engineers put their heads together to come up with this bizarre amalgam of joypad, mouse and joystick. It's usage is quite specific: it aims to replace mouse and keyboard as our favoured controller for first-person shooters. It works with other games, but the rotating construction could be off putting.

The two parts of the Dual Strike are connected by a socket joint, which allows movement of two axes through about 50 degrees. This is intended to represent your head, and, with the 'mouselook' option enabled, controls aiming as a mouse would. Moved to an extreme of the x-axis, the viewpoint will continue to move. There are four thumb buttons on this part, as well as a trigger. The left section has a flat hat switch for movement and strafing, with three further buttons and another trigger. Tested with *Half-Life*, it takes some time to get used to and feels imprecise. Having said that, a beginner to the genre is just as likely take to this system as any other

THE VERDICT

At fifty notes, this is an expensive and unnecessary addition to a gaming set-up.

65%

PC AVENGER (GAMEPORT)

LOGIC 3

0208 9022211 www.logic3.co.uk

£20

THIS is like watching four TV channels at once: complete information overload. A digital D-pad and an analogue controller (like the N64's) accompany a cacophony of six buttons, two triggers, an uninspiring throttle slider and nine selector switches. These control turbo-fire for most of the buttons as well as speed and analogue/digital selection

Unsurprisingly, installation and calibration was a bit of a trial, but I eventually worked out what all the buttons and switches were for. Despite appearing rather lumpen, the Avenger sits in the hands rather well, with triggers particularly well-placed

My only real niggle with the design is the D-pad; it's horribly clicky and too close to the base of my thumb. The joysticklet, on the other hand, is well-placed and even has tiny calibration sliders.

Ultimately, the Avenger may offer too much for some gamers, who might be put off by the amount of calibration on offer. Nevertheless, the excellent analogue controller is a real bonus

THE VERDICT

Stacks of buttons, and a smashing analogue controller. Nice price, too.

86%

PC RAIDER (GAMEPORT)

LOGIC 3

0208 9022211 www.logic3.co.uk

£15

THE Avenger's less sophisticated (i.e fewer buttons) sibling, the PC Raider is the less complicated member of the family. That said, there are four shoulder buttons, four thumb buttons and seven selector switches (turbo fire and speed selectors), so it's still one of the more heavily-stacked pads

Surprisingly, it's pleasant to use and doesn't suffer from the Avenger's excesses All buttons are distinct and unlikely to be pressed accidentally; the finish is smooth, and construction seems decent enough. It has the same irritating clicky D-pad as the Avenger, though, and I had a few puzzled moments installing it: in the end, I made it imitate the Avenger and all seemed well.

Ergonomically, it's not far from perfect, with everything in easy and comfortable reach. Having said that, I would have preferred an analogue controller; but at this price you can't grumble. The switches, both on this and the Avenger, are a nice touch, harking back to the days when Quickshot ruled the world.

THE VERDICT

Avenger's kid brother. Nicely priced, well-designed pad with plenty of features.

88%

PIT

I love joypads. But enough about my home life: bring on the peripheral toys!

By ROSS ATHERTON

PADDED-UP

Can anyone remember when joypads made their grand entrance to the world of the PC? One minute, we were managing fine with horrid clicky Quickshot sticks: the next, it was the peripheral you couldn't be without. Personally, I blame the consoles. With their fancy, colourful, many-buttoned, vaguely obscene designs, they've been a massive influence on the PC market, and now there's even more to choose from than joysticks.

They can be used for a surprising variety of games, if you have the inclination. Football and other sports games are the obvious candidates, but flight sims and racing games are others to consider. In this group test I was looking for features, ergonomics, price, construction and appearance. I used *FIFA 99*, *Rogue Squadron*, *Half-Life* and *Episode I – Racer* to test them, and a PC with Windows 98. Don't forget that if you're running Windows 95 or don't have USB ports, you won't be able to use the USB pads without an adaptor.

NEXT MONTH I'll be fixing up all the latest modems.

EEZEE PAD (GAMEPORT)

FANATEC

01564 779136 www.elsa.com

£10

FANATEC it appears, are determined to take over the world of peripherals. The only way to install drivers for their products is to install GameCommander, a program comes with each one and is intended to launch games and calibrate controllers. Once the peripheral has been installed, you could uninstall GameCommander, but I think it's a bit of a bloody liberty

I could forgive all this, if the drivers were accurate. Yes, you guessed it, the drivers are incorrect. It's supposed to be an eight-button-plus-D pad controller; but Windows only recognises four buttons, a D-pad and two further axes – like wheel pedals. It'll still do the job, but not as it was intended. That aside, construction is decent but curious. There's a removable metal pin which fits onto the D-pad to make a proto-joystick. There are also three optional suckers which can attach the pad to a suitable surface for arcade-style action, which makes this the most bizarre pad on offer in this group test. Yes, even more so than the Dual Strike.

THE VERDICT

Cheap and quirky, but ruined by poor drivers and installation gubbins.

60%

WINGMAN GAMEPAD EXTREME (USB)

01306 734300 www.logitech.co.uk

£35

I'VE never been quite sure why Logitech's peripherals are outrageous enough to be get earmarked as 'Extreme'. This one has more claim to the title than most; it's got fancy G Force Tilt motion-sensing technology.

In case you're unfamiliar with the concept, this means the physical tilting of the pad in your hands translates to joystick movement. Also on offer on the Gamepad Extreme are two triggers, eight buttons and a macro button, allowing combo moves to be stored in a single button-press. It has a USB plug and a gameport adaptor, so everyone should be happy.

None of this is new; but the Gamepad Extreme pulls it off with serious finesse. Construction is solid yet light; the eight-way D-pad is the best I've used and installation and calibration was a breeze. With the G-Force switched off it functions exactly like a normal gamepad, so is ideal for any game. The design is snug, and fits my calloused paws perfectly. The price isn't ideal, but you get what you pay for, eh?

THE VERDICT

Not cheap, but easily the best on offer here. Fancy technology *and* good design.

91%

SFX GAMEPAD USB

01453 885855 www.suncominc.com

£20, or free from PC GAMER

HIDEOUS! This is finished with the kind of scratchy grey plastic that sets your teeth on edge and makes you want to howl at the moon. Beneath the surface, though, lies a gamepad of determined mediocrity.

There's a mushy D-pad, twin triggers, and a flock of buttons which appear to be huddling together for warmth. Unless your thumbs have the precision of a ballet dancer, you'll hit the wrong buttons, so it's best to only assign a couple

Ergonomically, it's not great at first. After a while, though, the comfortable solution was to hold the thing by the end of the prongs. Installation is gratifyingly easy, with a simple install driver-and-that's-your-lot routine. It also seems to have the construction of a Sherman tank: I couldn't break it no matter how hard I tried. I can't face having this thing in the office any more. If you can offer a good home to this ugly duckling, write to me at the usual address or pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk, marking your entry "Ugly, Ugly, Joy, Joy"

THE VERDICT

Clearly designed by a raving madman. Seems unbreakable. Could be yours for free.

70%

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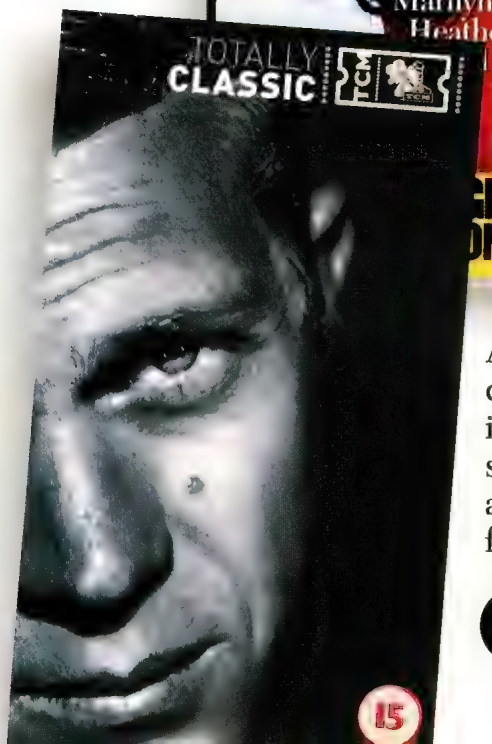

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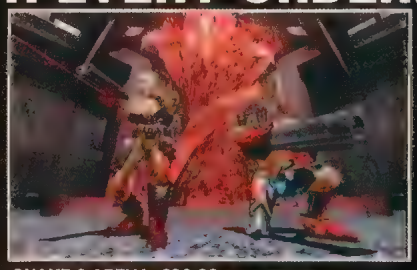

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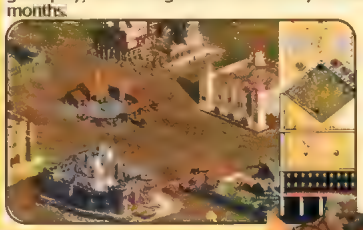

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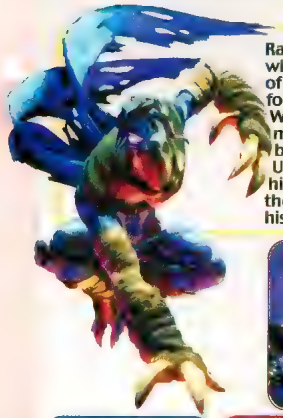
- Beautifully animated creatures and atmospheric soundtrack
- Drain the souls of vanquished enemies to restore your powers



Raziel is a vampire who has been cast out of the vampire world for growing wings. Weak and drained he must fight his way back to the Underworld to seek his revenge against those responsible for his suffering.

TOMB RAIDER 4

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3D ADVENTURE

Once again Lara Croft is chest deep in trouble, as she uncovers an ancient prophecy regarding the alignment of the stars at the millennium, which surely spells trouble for the rest of the world. Lucky she's about really. Set entirely in Egypt, and shifting away from the gun blazing action of the last two instalments, The Last Revelation returns to the puzzle solving and exploration of the original, making for a more cerebral experience all round.

HOMEWORLD

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3D SPACE CONQUEST

YOU NEED TO GET HOME, BUT NOT EVERYONE SHARES YOUR VIEW. MANAGE YOUR RESOURCES TO ENSURE SURVIVAL IN AN EVER INCREASING LEVEL OF CONFLICT.

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- Choose from 12 weapons
- Features a unigue 3D engine
- Wage war in a heroic fashion
- Multi-player option

DIABLO II

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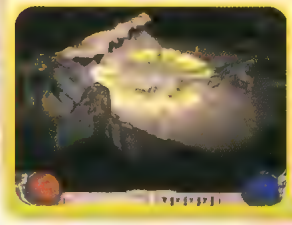
ROLE PLAYING ADVENTURE

One of the most eagerly anticipated games of all time is almost with us! Diablo brought role playing to the masses, with its easy to use controls and addictive gameplay, and Diablo 2 looks set to continue that tradition. With 4 separate acts spread across 4 CDs, 5 playable characters, a host of new spells, and an intricate plot with quests and sub quests to tackle, Diablo 2 is going to be a devil of a game.



HALF LIFE–OPPOSING FORCE

3D ADVENTURE SHOOTER

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An official expansion pack for the best selling Half Life, Opposing Force casts you as one of the government soldiers who gave Gordon so much trouble in the first game. A new alien race has appeared amid the chaos, and it is down to you to deal with this deadly threat. With a whole new arsenal at your command, and a variety of non player characters to interact with, Opposing Force shows you Half Life from a whole new angle!

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SCI-FI HORROR ROLEPLAYING

"A SCI-FI HORROR MASTERPIECE"
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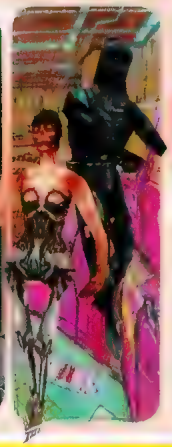
- 14 weapons that you can modify, repair and upgrade with different ammo
- Find new ways to overcome the fiendish puzzles and adversaries
- Develop your chosen character as the story unfolds
- You are the victim not the hero
- CO-OP 4 player option

Set 40 years after the first game. The world was close to destruction as a result of a computer virus, the virus is back and more deadly. The atmosphere the game creates is one of extreme fear and tension. The intricate story has many subquests to occupy your attention, this allows for return visits to see what you missed the first time.



BATTLEZONE II

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SCI-FI 3D STRATEGY

Battlezone 2 follows on from the original, with the USA and the USSR having joined forces to protect Pluto from an invading alien force. Keeping the brilliant gameplay from the original, the sequel adds increased 3D support, allowing for stunning terrain, with tunnels, bridges and more. New units are now at your command, and you can pilot any one of them, or travel on foot. With full strategy elements allowing you to create your base and units, and the immersive feeling of the 3D combat giving you total freedom to go wherever you want, Battlezone 2 is a classic in the making.

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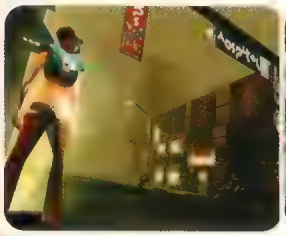
Far in the future, computers control the lives of humans, demons roam the cities devouring souls, and a brave visionary has entered the computer system to try and change the system from within. Featuring incredible 3D graphics, a soundtrack from David Bowie and almost 16 hours of speech, Nomad Soul is an adventure like no other.



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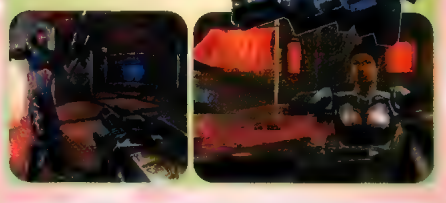

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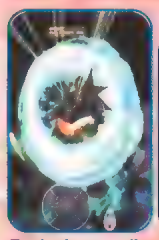
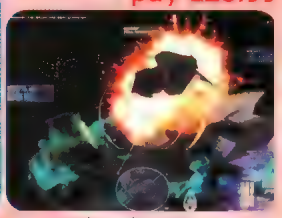

Featuring an all new campaign with over 30 missions, 70 different space craft, a new in depth combat system, and a mission and scenario editor, Conflict Freespace 2 takes space combat gaming to a new dimension. With multiplayer dogfights, squad wars, and cooperative play, this is the closest you can get to a real star war.

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WWII 3D SHOOT'EM UP

1945 AND THE GERMANS WON WORLD WAR 2, GO BACK IN TIME AND STOP THEM

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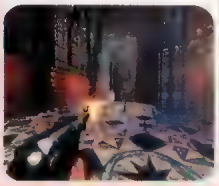
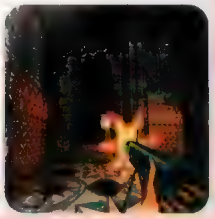
- Choose from 12 weapons
- Features a unique 3D engine
- Wage war in a heroic fashion
- Multi-player option

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The world famous series returns with an all new game engine. Now presented in stunning 3D, the game once again follows Gabriel Knight as he seeks out the truth of another bizarre mystery, set in rural France. With an atmospheric soundtrack, beautiful graphics and an engrossing storyline, Gabriel Knight 3 is not to be missed.

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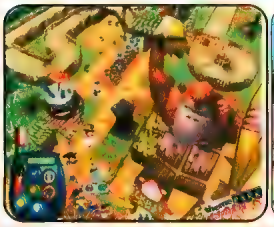

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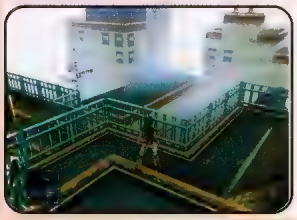

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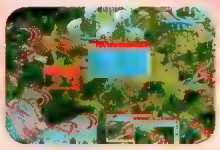

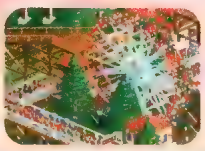

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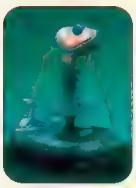

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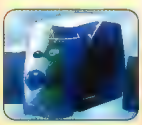

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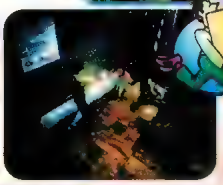

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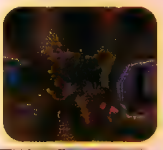

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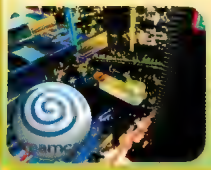

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CDGAMER

Unreal Tournament. GTA 2. Battlezone II. GP 500. Rogue Spear. The quality and quantity of this month's demos speak for themselves, so stop reading and get playing!

DEMO OF THE MONTH
CD GAMER 2

UNREAL TOURNAMENT
Minimum: Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, 4Mb D3D Accelerator, DirectX 7

This is the one you've all been waiting for. The demo features six maps and five modes of play to test your skills to the limit. The first four maps, Phobos Moon, Tempest, Turbine and our personal favourite Morpheus are for Tournament Deathmatch, Instagib Deathmatch and Tournament Team Game modes. The next map, Tomb of Sesmar is for Domination play and finally Coret Facility is the one Capture the Flag level available.

The demo features artificial intelligence bots for all modes of play plus full network and Internet support for multi-player gaming. *Unreal Tournament* requires a new version of DirectX, so we've supplied version 7 in the 'Utilities' section of CD GAMER 1; please install this prior to running the demo. We've also been made aware of slow frame rates with TNT graphics cards in systems with only 64Mb RAM, to solve this we recommend that you download the latest drivers for your card or try running in software mode – amazingly, it can sometimes be faster.

CONTROLS:
Alt/left mouse button – Fire
Right mouse button – Alternate fire
Up/down arrows – Forward/backward
Left/right arrows – Strafe left/right
Ctrl/space – Jump
C – Crouch
M – Mouse look
Del/page down – Look up/down
End – Centre view
Shift – Walk
F – Feign death
T – Say
R – Team say
V – Show voice menu
, – Throw weapon
+/- – Increase/decrease HUD

GTA 2
TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Exclusive playable demo of this sequel to one of the most controversial and popular games of recent years, *Grand Theft Auto*. Our demo features six minutes of playing time in which you must carry out such noble tasks as planting a bomb in a university and driving a getaway car for bank robbers.

CONTROLS:
Up/down arrows – Accelerate/brake
Left/right arrows – Turn left/right
Left Ctrl – Attack
Enter – Enter/exit
Space – Handbrake/jump
Z/X – Previous/next weapon
Tab – Special
Left Alt – Special 2

DEMOS

RAYMAN 2
UBI SOFT
Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, 3D Accelerator

Take control of Rayman in this exclusive playable demo of his second adventure. The level starts with Rayman under heavy attack; use this to your advantage and guide the incoming projectiles to a specific target by standing on it. Once your way is clear you can then proceed through the rest of the 3D cartoon land.

CONTROLS:
Arrow keys – Directional control
A – Jump
Double-tap A – Helicopter mode
Space – Fire
Ctrl & left/right arrow – Strafe
Shift – Walk
Numpad 0 – Walk mode

GP500
MICROPROSE
Minimum: Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, D3D Accelerator

Practice, qualify and then race on the classic Mugello circuit in Italy in this playable demo of MicroProse's impressive motorcycle racing sim, *GP 500*. Up to 8 computer controlled opponents, with adjustable skill levels, will compete with you over the 10 or 20% race distance you choose.

CONTROLS:
Up/down arrow – Accelerate/brake
Left/right arrow – Turn left/right
W/S – Lean forward/back
A/D – Lead left/right
R – Reverse
Caps lock/left shift – Shift gears up/down
Ctrl – Smart shift
Spacebar – Look back
1 – Far chase view
2 – Medium chase view
3 – On-bike view
4 – Helmet cam
5 – Virtual helmet cam
6 – TV mode cam
L – Change the on-bike LCD display
F1 – HUD config 1
F2 – HUD config 2
F3 – HUD config 3
F4 – HUD config 4

DEMOS

F5 – Stop sign hint on/off
F6 – Skid hint on/off
F7 – Tyre indicator on/off
Esc – In-game menu

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER
EIDOS INTERACTIVE
Minimum: Pentium 200, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, 3D Accelerator

Try out an early level from this dark 3D platformer that has finally been converted from the smash-hit PlayStation title. If you happen to get stuck, such as in the water at the start, use the crouch key followed by jump to boost the height of your jump.

CONTROLS:
Esc – Options menu
Up/down arrow – Move forward/back
Left/right arrow – Move left/right
Numpad 0 – Rotate camera right
Right Ctrl – Rotate camera left
A – Action
D – Suck
Space or X – Jump/swim
F – Aim/grapple
C – Crouch
S – Sneak/face enemy
Left Ctrl – Zoom (camera control)

MADDEN NFL 2000
ELECTRONIC ARTS
Minimum: Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, D3D Accelerator

Play an exhibition game between the Falcons & Broncos in this latest addition to the popular Madden series of American football titles.

CONTROLS:
Menu Controls:
Arrow keys – Highlight menu item/cycle options
Enter – Select option
S – Cancel selection
F1 – Help menu
Backspace – Toggle menu sub items/change focus window

Offence-Pass:
D – Snap the ball
A – View receiver (Pass)
S,D,F,W,R – Pass to receiver
E – Throw away ball

Offence-Run:
D – Snap the ball
D – Speed burst
S – Dive/QB slide
E – Jump/hurdle
F – Spin move
G – Stiff arm
W/R – Juke left/right
A – Lateral the ball

Defence:
D – Switch players
S – Dive
F – Speed burst/power tackle
E – Jump
R – Swim move

Kicking
D then D – Kick-off/punt/field goal
Arrow Keys – Direction of kick

NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2000
MICROSOFT
Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Playable demo featuring a short game between the New York Nicks and the San Antonio Spurs.

CONTROLS:
On offence, with ball:
Arrow keys – Move player
Space – Shoot (hold, then release)
Tap space – Fake shot
Left Alt – Pass
Ctrl – Crouch, protect ball
Z – Call for pick
C – Pivot
Shift – Turbo

On offence, without ball:
Arrow keys – Move player
Space – Jump for rebound
Left Alt – Switch player
X – Call for pass
Ctrl – Box out defender
Z – Set pick
Shift – Turbo

On defence:
Arrow keys – Move player
Space – Jump to rebound or block/put hands up
Left Alt – Switch player
X – Steal
Ctrl – Defensive crouch
Z – Take a charge
C – Trap
Shift – Turbo

Grapple large sweaty men in *Madden NFL 2000*. What could be more fun?

NHL 2000
ELECTRONIC ARTS
Minimum: Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, 2Mb DirectDraw Graphics

Probably the most popular of the three American sports games included on this months CD (and, indeed, in the reviews section) in terms of computer entertainment, EA's ice hockey games are always welcome in the GAMER offices. This playable demo features an exhibition game between the Buffalo Sabres and the Dallas Stars.

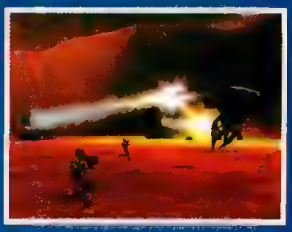
CONTROLS:
With puck:
C – Pass/face off
Space – Shoot
X – Speed burst
Z – Deke

Without puck:
C – Change player
X – Speed burst/body check
Space – Hook/hold/block shot
Z – Big hit

Fighting:
Space – High punch
C – Low punch

Additional controls:
S – Side step
B – Skate backwards
D – Deflection/block shot

BATTLEZONE II
ACTIVISION
Minimum: Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, 4Mb D3D Accelerator



Playable demo of this futuristic tank battle sequel. You're on a rescue mission to recover survivors from a crashed craft in hostile territory, once you've reached this objective, you must destroy what's left of the downed ship and protect the transport craft carrying your recovered men.

CONTROLS:
Movement:
W/S – Forward/back
A/D – Strafe left/right
Mouse right/left – Turn left/right
E – Jump
H – Exit vehicle
O – Orders

Targeting & HUD:
Left mouse button – Fire weapon
Right mouse button – Cycle weapons
T – Nearest enemy
R – Radar change
Space – Select object
Ctrl & function key – Select unit in group

Camera views:
Shift & F1 – Cockpit HUD view
Shift & F2 – Over vehicle view
Shift & F3 – External camera view
Shift & F5 – Toggle HUD
Arrow keys – External camera controls
+/- – Zoom in/out
Esc – Options

STAR WARS PIT DROIDS
LUCAS LEARNING/UBISOFT
Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

If you've seen Episode I, and who hasn't by now, you'll be aware of the crazy antics of the 'Pit Droids' featured in the Pod race sequence. Now, you can take

charge of your very own Pit Droids as you guide them through increasingly difficult puzzles in this new title aimed at younger gamers.

CONTROLS:
Mouse movement – Move cursor
Left mouse button – Action

THIEF GOLD
EIDOS INTERACTIVE
Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Playable demo of this new edition of popular first-person sneak-em-up, *Thief*. Our demo features one of the new levels in which you must infiltrate the Thieves' Guild and steal Lord Randall's Sapphire vase.

CONTROLS:
W – Run forward
S – Walk forward
X – Backward
Z/C – Slide left/right
A/D – Turn left/right
T/G – Look up/down
V – Centre view
Q/E – Lean left/right
F – Toggle crouch
Left mouse button – Attack
Right mouse button – Use Item
Numpad minus/Middle mouse button – Block
Space – Jump
Shift – Speed toggle
R – Drop item
}/[– Next/previous item
M – View map
O – View objectives

TACTICAL MANAGER 2
BRIGHT STAR
Minimum: Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

Following the success of other recent football management titles, Bright Star have released a new version of their own title, *Tactical Manager*. Our demo features up to ten competitive and friendly matches to test your skills.

CONTROLS:
Mouse movement – Move cursor
Left mouse button – Action

DARKSTONE
ELECTRONIC ARTS
Minimum: Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Darkstone is a graphically impressive new RPG; our demo features a small explorable area from the full game.

CONTROLS:
Left button – Movement, action (including, speaking, picking up objects), attack
Left button & Ctrl – Change character's speed (walking/running)
Left button & Shift – Attack without moving
Right button – Cast a spell (clicking on target), activate an object, reading letters or spell books
1, 2, 3, 4 , 5, 6, 7 and 8 – Select a stored spell or skill
B – Book of spells
ENTER – Open message window (in Multi-player mode only)
ESC – Display or quit main menu
SPACEBAR – Return quickly to the game and close all menus
F1, F2, F3 and F4 – Use objects on the first character's Belt (if playing with two characters)
F5, F6, F7 and F8 – Use objects on the second character's Belt (this applies to the first character if playing with one character)
F9 – Default camera mode
F10 – Camera top down mode
F11 – TRACKING 1 camera mode
F12 – TRACKING 2 camera mode
ARROW KEYS LEFT/RIGHT – Camera rotation
ARROW KEYS UP/DOWN – Camera zoom in/out
F – Automatic/manual combat mode
G – Enable/disable solo mode
H – Display history of current adventure
I – Inventory
L – List of places visited
TAB – Display or quit map (Num Lock OFF)
Page Up – Change character
Page Down – Change character
Numeric keypad 4 and 6 – Rotation (Num Lock OFF)
Numeric keypad 8 and 2 – Zoom (Num Lock OFF)
Q – Quick save
R – Enter rest mode
BACKSPACE – Run or walk
S – List available spells
LEFT/RIGHT/UP/DOWN – Scroll through map when displayed
SHIFT + selected spell – Save spell
Ctrl & Enter – Enter guild code
T – Open/close the Skills list
+/ - - Adjusts brightness of Map

EXPERT POOL
PSYGNOSIS
Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Playable demo featuring 9 Ball and Bottle Pool modes of play.

CONTROLS:
Space – Cancel
Mouse Movement – Move
Left Mouse Button – Select
Right Mouse Button – Modify
Shot View:
Mouse movement – Adjust rotation (left/right) and elevation (up/down) of viewpoint
Right mouse button – Modifies vertical mouse movement to control zoom: up/down to zoom in/out
Respot View:
Mouse Movement – Adjust rotation (left/right) and elevation (up/down) of viewpoint

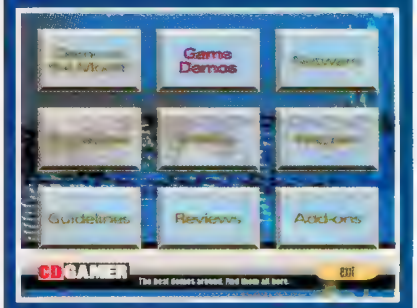
Matt's new haircut was a big hit down the pool hall.

THE WINDOWS 95 MENU

Insert the CD-ROM into your drive and the CD GAMER menu program will 'autorun' (so long as you have this Windows 95 feature enabled) and after a few seconds you will be presented with an introduction screen. You are then invited to 'Run the menu'. Selecting this option will launch the CD GAMER menu program. From here you can install this month's selection of game demos and access the reviews database and guidelines sections.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Click here to go straight to the game of the month.

RETURN TO WINDOWS
If, for some reason, the menu program does not automatically start, perhaps the autorun feature is disabled on your system. Go to the START/RUN command on the taskbar and type D:\PCG.EXE (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).



GOT A PROBLEM?
If your CD is defective, please return it to the address below. Please make sure you have followed our installation procedures correctly before you send it back to us to ensure that there is a physical problem. Please send the CD along with a description of the fault together with a self addressed envelope to the address below. Return postage will be paid.

PC GAMER CD Returns, Disctronics, Southwater Business Park, Worthing Road, Southwater, West Sussex, RH13 7YT

A CD should only need replacing if the CD itself cannot be read. If, instead, you are experiencing problems with an individual demo or application, phone the number below and ask for our technical support line. This is open between 9.30am and 6pm from Monday to Friday.

Tel 01225 442244 (Ask for Technical Support)
Fax 01225 732279
E-mail: pcgamer.support@futurenet.co.uk

Please note that the help-line staff provide assistance with technical problems directly related to our cover CD and cannot provide training on software or hardware in general.

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CD GAMER 2

RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR

TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE

Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Exclusive playable demo featuring the first mission from *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear*, 'Operation Pandora Hammer'.

CONTROLS:

Movement:
W/S – Forward/back
A/D – Strafe left/right
C – Toggle crouch
Right mouse button – Run
Q/E – Peek left/right
Action:
Space – Manipulate environment
Left mouse button – Use inventory item/fire
Z – Change magazine
B – Change rate of fire
1 – Select primary weapon
2 – Select secondary weapon
3 – Select inventory item 1
4 – Select inventory item 2
N – Select next weapon/item
Team:
Page up/down – Cycle team
R – Toggle team 'hold in place'
F – Change ROE mode
V – Change ROE speed
7 – Status report
J – Give go-code Alpha
K – Give go-code Bravo
L – Give go-code Charlie
M – Give go-code Delta
Slash – Toggle follow mode
H – Toggle hold control
Y – Toggle sniper control
View:
Left Shift – Toggle sniper mode
5 – Toggle night vision
F1 – Toggle camera view
T – Toggle map fullscreen
Right/left bracket – Map zoom
Numpad 5 – Centre view
Communications:
Apostrophe – Toggle chat
Return – toggle team chat
Options:
F4 – Toggle auto aim
F3 – Toggle targeting reticule
6 – Show status display
Planning:
Q/E – Rotate map left/right
W/S – Map move forward/back
A/D – Move left/right on map
Right/left bracket – Zoom map
Up/Down – Move up/down one level on map
+/- – Tilt map up/down
V – Toggle map 3D view
Del – Delete waypoint on map

THE SETTLERS III: QUEST OF THE AMAZONS

BLUE BYTE

Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Exclusive demo featuring one demo map from this new add-on for the ever popular *Settlers III*.

CONTROLS:

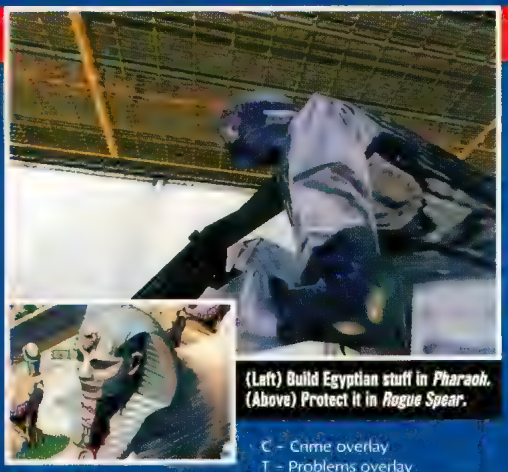
Mouse movement – Move cursor
Left mouse button – Select unit/item
Right mouse button – Move unit/attack

AGE OF WONDERS

TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE

Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Exclusive demo of Take 2's new isometric 3D RPG featuring a tutorial and one scenario.



(Left) Build Egyptian stuff in *Pharaoh*. (Above) Protect it in *Rogue Spear*.

CONTROLS:

Arrow keys – Scroll the map
PGUP – Map level up
PGDN – Map level down
N – Next unit
M – Move unit
O – Observe enemy movement
SHIFT – Hold SHIFT to select multiple parties or units for a single move command.
ALT-ENTER – Switches between full screen and windowed mode
ESC – Quits from most screens
F1 – Recalls last tip in the Tutorial

PHARAOH

SIERRA

Minimum: Pentium 133, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Playable demo of Sierra's strategy title, *Pharaoh*, which aims to continue the success attained by the *Caesar* series of games.

CONTROLS:

[– Decrease game speed
] – Increase game speed
F – Fire overlay
D – Damage overlay
C – Crime overlay
T – Problems overlay
Space – Toggle between normal overlay and last overlay
F6 – Windowed mode (only at 16bit color depth)
F7 – 640x480 resolution
F8 – 800x600 resolution
F9 – 1024x768 resolution
Number keys, '-' and '=' – Advisors (when available)
ESC – Quit game
Hotkeys for Ships
A – Auto attack
E – Auto evade
Z – Repair
R – Ramming speed
M – Normal move
B – Return to base (wharf)

DISCWORLD NOIR

GT INTERACTIVE

Minimum: Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Explore a small set of locations from this graphic adventure epic.

CONTROLS:

Mouse movement – Move cursor
Left mouse button – Select

CD GAMER: FULL CONTENTS LIST

DISC 1

GAME DEMOS:
Unreal Tournament
Grand Theft Auto 2
Rayman 2
Battlezone II
Darkstone
Expert Pool
GP500
Madden NFL 2000
NBA Inside Drive 2000
NHL 2000
Star Wars Pit Droids
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver
Thief Gold
Tactical Manager 2
Train Town

ADD-ONS
Dungeon Keeper 2
Bonus Packs 1,2 & 3

PATCHES
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I've Got Some Balls
Spheres of Chaos

DISC 2

GAME DEMOS:
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Age of Wonders
The Settlers III: Quest of the Amazons
Discworld Noir
Pharaoh

ADD-ONS
USS Darkstar

PATCHES
Half-Life

VIDEOS
The Sims
M25 Racer

MAIL US!

We are always interested to receive feedback from you concerning our cover CDs. If you have any comments or suggestions for future discs then please contact our resident CD-ROM editor, Trevor Witt, by e-mail on tfwitt@futurenet.co.uk or at the usual address.

Right Mouse Button – Modify mouse movement to control ball position
Left Mouse Button – Enter shot view stage 1
Shot View Stage 1:
Mouse Movement – Adjust orientation of cue: left/right modifies cue angle, and up/down modifies view elevation (note, view elevation, not cue elevation)
Right Mouse Button – Modify vertical mouse movement to control zoom: up/down to zoom in/out
Left Mouse Button – Enter shot view stage 2
Space – Return to respot view (if applicable)
Shot View Stage 2:
Mouse Movement – Adjust orientation of cue: left/right modifies cue angle, and up/down modifies view elevation (note, view elevation, not cue elevation)
Right Mouse Button – Modify mouse movement to control cue tip position
Both Mouse Buttons – Modify vertical mouse movement to control cue elevation
Left Mouse Button – Modify vertical mouse movement to control shot strength: pull back on the mouse and push forward to take a shot
Space – Return to shot view stage 1

TRAIN TOWN

SIERRA

Minimum: Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Guide your train from station to station delivering the required cargo. Part of a new range of educational games for youngsters from Sierra.

CONTROLS:

Mouse movement – Cursor
Left mouse button – Select

UPGRADING YOUR DRIVERS

Upgrading drivers can be a daunting task. We take you through installing the Voodoo 2 drivers from CD GAMER 1.

1. When you select the new Voodoo 2 drivers from the 'Utilities' menu, note *where* the files have been copied: you'll need this info later (for point 6).
2. Click on 'Start', 'Settings', 'Control Panel'. Double-click the 'System' icon and the 'System Properties' screen will come up.
3. Select 'Device Manager' and scroll down until you see 'Sound, video and game controllers'. Click on the plus sign. From the list of devices you should pick 'Voodoo 2 3D Accelerator'. Click on the Properties button.
4. Choose the 'Driver' tab, then the update driver button, and you'll enter the 'Update device driver wizard'.
5. Select 'Yes' to have Windows search for the new driver.
6. Select 'Other Locations' and enter the information you noted earlier: the name of the directory where you copied the drivers. You may have to do this a few times, Windows being a bit slow on the uptake.

For further assistance with drivers, you can contact our Technical Support on 01225 442244, or pcgamer.support@futurenet.co.uk.

NEXT MONTH!

THEME PARK WORLD

REVIEWED!

Can the sequel better one of the **biggest-selling** games of all **time?** Have Bullfrog finally found their mission **impossible?** Find out **first** in PC GAMER 77!

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All magazine contents and gifts subject to change

THE WONDERFUL WEIRD WIRED WORLD OF RICHARD GARRIOTT

We sent our agent to look at *Ultima Ascension*. He returned with some impressive tales to tell...

Richard Garriott's standing in front of me. He's holding a three-legged silver object with a large round spherical body. It's about four feet tall. It looks something like an ultra-posh barbecue kit. He explains what it is. When the Soviets were planning on trumping the Americans by sending Sputnik into space, they made twelve satellite cases. One they sent up. Nine got lost. Two are left. He's holding one of them. Bloody. Hell.

You see, Mr. Garriott is rich enough to make even our own Ross Atherton feel something of a pauper. He's one of the two founders of Origin. They sold it in 1992 to Electronic Arts for a sum rumoured to be about $30 million. With *Ultima Online*, he's certainly earned a lot more since.

But Mr Garriott knows how to spend cash. While most developers will just splash out on a flash sports car, the creator of Ultima shows more imagination. So, when your GAMER agent was given the opportunity to be shown around Mr Garriott's private house, he jumped at the chance.

It sits on a hill outside Austin, Texas, and looks relatively inconspicuous from the outside. Except for the dome of the telescope observatory on top of it, naturally. Richard's got a thing about space, you see. His father was an astronaut and he'd love to follow him into the vacuum. He's currently undergoing cosmonaut training. He also bought a moon-buggy. No big deal, you might think. Except this vehicle is actually *on the moon*. This makes him the only private holder of property on an extraterrestrial body. Interestingly, while there's a law to stop governments from claiming land off-planet, there's no similar rule for individuals...

His current house, as well as brimming with objets d'art, is riddled with secret passageways. In classic Scooby-Doo style, pulling an innocuous ornament prompts a wooden panel to slide open revealing an unexpected route. Full samurai outfits stand alongside a cosmonaut's suit and an eight-foot antique diving outfit. A carousel twirls happily in the grounds. In the secret crypt, fossils and a shrunken human head sit. Ancient crossbows line the main hall.

Impressive enough? Maybe, but then he reveals the schematics for his *new* house, which is to be constructed over the next three years. Some specs? Well how about the three-levelled main hall whose whole end-room is on an elevator? Put a band on it, and then move between levels dramatically. Or the master bedroom, where the whole room can be raised up through the retractable ceiling to let you sleep under the stars Or the house-computer, Spirit, who goes far beyond the "Lights on" commands of popular lore, and is able to locate where people are in the building or even haunt them, opening doors and shaking pictures as the poor individual passes by. Oh, and don't forget the 150-foot shaft connecting the mansion with the lake far below. It's *exactly* the sort of place which you always hoped that visionary creators live in. Current estimated price? Ten million dollars.

And you know what the real kicker is? You can't even feel slightly jealous as he's actually *using* the money to have more fun than you ever would.

As my gran always said, you can't take it with you.

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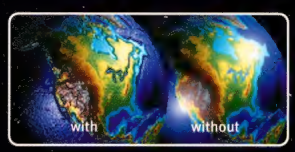

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